

ADDRESSES.

ADDRESSES

AND

SERMONS.

BY

E. E. JENKINS, M.A.,

PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CONFERENCE, 1880.

AUTHOR OF 'SERMONS DELIVERED IN MADRAS,' &c., &c.

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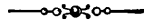
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PREFACE.



ALL the pieces composing this volume, except two, were prepared for certain occasions of a Wesleyan President's year of office. The reader must judge whether they ought to survive these occasions, even for a brief period. The author, in spite of a disturbing suspicion that much in these compositions might have been allowed to perish outright, hopes that a few things will be found in them which many are waiting to learn, or will be glad to meet. If any apology be needed for introducing a sermon which was preached six years ago, it is not due to the public, but to the memory of the friend whose death it commemorates; and whose character was entitled to receive an earlier recognition, as it certainly merited a worthier tribute, than is here offered to eminent talents, honest service, and rare personal worth. There is in Methodism a mine of biographical treasure awaiting the toil of the explorer; and if an attempt were made to bring to the light the distinguishing energies of Mr. Wiseman's mind, the incidents of his ministry, and the lessons of his career, it ought to furnish the young preacher with an example which would repay study, and the general reader with a benefaction to literature.

E. E. J.

BLACKHEATH,
January, 1882.

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I.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

TO THE STUDENTS OF THE WESTMINSTER AND
SOUTHLANDS COLLEGES, DELIVERED
DECEMBER 18TH, 1880.



MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS AND FELLOW-LABOURERS,
There is scarcely any labour assigned to me in this my official year to which I can address myself with so congenial a temper as that which I bring to the task of to-day. Many years of my missionary life were spent in school work ; and as I was then inured to the difficulties and became familiar with the solitudes and the unequally distributed results of teaching, the impressions of those days are still with me in very vivid forms. I cherish them, and add to them unconsciously, through an ever-present sympathy with the human mind, especially in the earlier stages of its growth. Its movements during this time fascinate me, as the spectator of a contest may be supposed to be under a spell of curiosity while the features of the struggle are opening out, and the early dispositions of the forces, upon which nearly everything depends, predict to the critical eye what the probable result will be. The spectacle of a mind

in action moving in the direction of triumph or of failure transcends in interest and significance every conceivable exhibition of trial. A false idea in childhood, which a brief instruction might have corrected, has sometimes involved the ruin of a life; and where this catastrophe has been averted, it has often reduced by one half the period of its useful service. Among the regrets of every thoughtful man must be the virtual abridgment of his life, too brief if nothing were lost, through the wasteful errors of early years. You are called, not to arrest the wandering of an adult mind, if haply its last steps may be turned into the ways of truth, and a fragment of the wreck saved, but to be present before the mind has fairly commenced its career, to help to plan that career, to follow and encourage it while its first steps are timid and irresolute, and to point out where its great strength lies. This duty which the study of experience has made an art will be the glad work of all earnest and good men as they may find the opportunity of doing it; but it is *your profession*. Training the young is a home task, and it is inalienable. You are skilled helpers of the parent; and where you find the parental authority void, you fill the seat of the child's natural guardian and preceptor, not for one home, but for many. You are preparing to be the Wisdom of the land; to put forth your voice as you stand in the top of high places, by the way, in the places of the paths, at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors; * to speak chosen words to the childhood and youth of the nation, words that will render a more eminent service to the country than the legislation of restraint and defence.

* Prov. viii. 1-3.

This function of government addresses itself to minds whose errors are matured, whose powers of mischief know no law but external force, whose misery is desperate. If we walk through the streets of London, or of any large city, and happen to be in the mood for such reflections, what an exhibition of perverted and unhappy strength we meet in the life that crowds and jostles us on every side ! How sad the story of its career, as we read it in the prisons, the penitentiaries, the asylums, and the state charities, whose buildings give their designation and notoriety to our streets and squares ! How wonderful is the force of the human mind even in its errors and crimes ! Your mission, which without extravagance I may call sublime, is the task of bringing the enormous mental power of the country under the control of the conscience, placing government in the breast of the subject, instead of in the laws of the realm. If you were intellectualists, and were about to proceed to your work with the implements and lessons of merely human teaching, I should point to this highest mark of the teacher in a very different spirit from that in which I now press its attainment upon you. I should despair of your ever reaching it. There are honest and very able men who repudiate the *supernatural* ; and they sometimes thrust a problem before us, and smile good-naturedly as they see us weary our fingers in the attempt to separate its knots. But there is no problem in Christian dogma so intricate, so insoluble, as the question which is now engaging the attention of certain thinkers, How to educate a high non-Christian morality ? In the first place, they confess to themselves that, if they are right, Christianity ought never to have existed : in the second place, they are compelled to admit that the highest forms of morality known,

whether in doctrine or in character, are of Christian growth: and in the third place, the fact which they have dreaded to see is slowly stealing upon the sight, that the mind is not necessarily purified by losing its errors; that the clearest conviction of the folly and injustice of bad deeds does not necessarily furnish an adequate motive for goodness; that examples of moral excellence do not necessarily inspire the stimulus and power of imitation; that even absorbing intellectual activity, when engaged upon the noblest work, not only does not lift a man out of the reach of temptation, but does not save him from becoming the bond-slave of passion. There is a fact to be added which is even more disappointing and mortifying to those who confide in the sufficiency of mere knowledge and mental training:—Education, though the enemy of crime, is not the conqueror of crime.

This is so remarkable a circumstance that it may be worth while to re-state it, with one or two reflections, that we may have all its meaning before us. Crime is flagrant wickedness, and supposes the failure of those restraints by which wickedness is inclosed within the self of the person who commits it. Self-respect is a strong fence, even when it is not grounded in self-approval, but in public esteem. Without being careful to analyse the reasons of our good repute, we flatter it as correctly measuring a fair average of merit, and we value our personal honour in the gross. This is the outwork of a *good name*, the property, little or much, which every one of us is proud to call his own, and which most would defend with their life. When we allow a temptation to overwhelm this fence we consent to accept infamy rather than thwart our evil desires. Brutish indifference to the judgment and rights of others when they happen to stand in our way is the last depra-

vity of selfishness, and the government is obliged to chase it into dens and caves of the earth. One of the costliest functions of a civil administration is to guard decent and orderly life from the wild incursions or premeditated assaults of men who have broken loose from those common sentiments of self-respect which are the bands of a civilised community. Such sentiments do not rank high in morals: they are, in fact, the rudiments of society; those who are ignorant of them are barbarous, and those who despise them are infamous.

Now while it is true that the mass of our criminals belong to the illiterate classes, the offences for which they are punished are not, for the most part, the highest order of crimes. They reflect pretty accurately a condition of poverty and ignorance, a condition which becomes vicious as it becomes chronic; it is, unhappily, the inheritance of multitudes, and crime seems to be its necessary exercise and activity. Want prompts theft; intemperance makes depravity lawless, and gives immediate ripeness to the seminal iniquity of the heart; ignorance hides from the offender's consideration every *alternative* to vice: and human beings are wild beasts that must be caged or fenced out. But the most scandalous and dangerous felons are those who, by the help of skilled faculties, make crime a fine art; men of education who can construct and execute huge frauds, and conceal their villanies under whatever mask will serve their turn, commerce, philanthropy, and even piety. I cannot conceive a more appalling image than that of an educated man who will sit down and deliberately plan a crime. We have been accustomed to attribute moral force to the examples of history; *he* has studied them. We have always credited taste with moral restraint as well as artistic refinement; *he* is

a man of taste. It is commonly supposed that good society, whether in the form of friendship or in the organised associations of clan, school, or club-life, will develop sentiments of honour and generosity; *he* has fraternised, even from youthful days, with gentlemen, and has mingled in equal rank with families of distinction and stainless repute. And this man will arm himself with talents, information, public character, and all the graces of culture, and use them in the service of wickedness the most flagitious, in which there shall not be a single redeeming circumstance; it shall be not only destructive of law and of right, but *mean* as well as mischievous—cruel, heartless, cowardly, base. Men of this class are not prodigies: their career is not to be explained by a rare conjunction of temperament and temptation. They must not be placed in the category of monsters. You will find them in continental prisons and in the penitentiaries of England; and if you could know the leading incidents of their life, you would discover that they are distinguished rather for the enormity and success of their crimes than for any idiosyncrasies of disposition.

But this does not by any means exhaust my illustrations from criminal records of the moral barrenness of intellectual teaching. I have cited what may be considered an extreme case, but not extreme in respect of the rareness of its occurrence, but only in the conspicuousness of its aptitude to strengthen the position I have laid down, that the education of our faculties may contribute little or nothing to the rectitude of our affections. We might descend, if it be a descent, to offenders of a humbler grade, and with whom I regret to say every police-court is familiar. I mean young men of respectable training and connections, who have preferred to wreck their character and bring shame and

heart-breaking upon their home, rather than forego their enjoyments. And of the vast amount of wickedness of which the law has no cognisance, of the ruin that overtakes multitudes of which the nation has no record, a much greater proportion than the most knowing of us is able to imagine is represented by the *instructed* classes of society.

In the light of these melancholy facts your colleges assume a rank in the country which no connexional partiality of mine can exaggerate. You go forth, not to undertake the doubtful and, as I think, the despairing experiment of making children good by setting their faculties in motion, by correcting ideas, imparting knowledge, and insuring self-discipline; but to build your work of child-training upon the fear of the Lord; to make that, not the supplement or ornament of wisdom, but the beginning, the foundation of it. And here I must express the satisfaction which I have always felt in considering a fundamental law of your Institution, that which requires conversion to God to qualify a candidate for admission. This law was made by a far-seeing prudence; and probably contained more and meant more than entered into the mind of those who established it. What is the worth of it to-day when education has become the law of the land; when the country is swept for the schools, and every nook, corner, and hiding-place is forced to yield up its children to the government teacher; and when the government does not demand the inculcation of a single religious truth? Every state requirement in the Education Code may be met, every state privilege enjoyed, by the managers of a school in which from one end of the year to the other the name of God shall not be even pronounced!

It is this fact that makes the conversion of our day-

school teachers indispensable; and there is another truth, which we must place by its side to arrive at a just estimate of the present necessity and worth of these colleges. While the government remits the question of the introduction of the Bible into their schools to the discretion of the Boards, some of the greatest teachers in England, whose works are state school books, deny the miraculous authority of the Bible, which is to deny the Bible. These gentlemen are as enthusiastic as they are able, and their names and influence are actively associated with anti-Christian doctrines. But *you* are Christian teachers; not teachers sympathising with religion, but teachers made by religion, whose purpose it is to teach religion; who even in school board schools will not be deterred from convincing your children that you have faith in God, who will carefully watch for every opportunity of introducing the nurture of the Lord; and that this is not incompatible with the severest school work, your college life has already assured you. The intellectual character of these colleges is not only not impaired by the Christian studies and the religious oversight which your principals are determined to maintain, but I will venture to say it is enhanced. The very circumstance that the exercises and lessons of devotion are popularly supposed to hazard purely scholastic results, will awaken the jealousy of your staff and the vigilance of your inspectors; and the examination reports we have heard to-day confirm the remark I have ventured to make. I visited an important town a few days ago in which there are several board schools, and it happens that every one of them has a student from Westminster or Southlands; and a gentleman informed me that these teachers are incomparably the best. A reputation for competent attainments and pro-

fessional success is with you the discharge of a Christian responsibility.

The teacher is the living book of the scholar. Remember that the child in the glamour of its awe and fancy will invest you with a kind of omniscience. The dream does not last; but while it abides you can do anything with your credulous and artless pupil; and if the vision passes, the impressions of the child remain. This is the time of your greatest power; and, during the brief reign of your omniscience, to be able to awaken in the child's soul the idea of a heavenly Father, and to entrench and support it by doctrine and testimony, will secure for you the ownership of the ground, and you will take possession in the name of the great Sovereign of men. Where this idea of God is lodged, and in a nature so much in sympathy with it as the heart of a child, other impressions in after life silt up around it until it becomes a bulwark which breaks the force of temptation *when the enemy comes in like a flood*. We entrust to you *faith in God*. We charge you to take this deposit to the schools of the country; it would be mockery to tell you that to deliver this truth to the children of England is the supreme vocation of your profession. As working disciples of the blessed Lord you apprehend at once that this is your mission. I should hardly presume to remind you of it but for the struggle it will cost you to give it its due place and authority as the motive of your work. The world will not so regard it; and even the government council does not admit it as the reason and ground of national education. There will be no recognition of it in the examination of school inspectors. You may totally neglect it, and attain the most excellent certificated rank; your children may show in their proficiency a result of teaching which shall place the school in the

highest possible grade; you may win every prize of your profession, and leave its noblest task undone! Even as masters and mistresses of our own schools, where the main purpose of teaching is the enlargement of the Church, you may practically forget both Bible and Church by reserving your enthusiasm and your skill for secular studies, marring the holy lessons of Christ by a cold or forgetful manner, and making the daintiest food unpalatable. You may suffer all this without intending to permit it. I will not imagine for a moment that you will go to your work without a conscience, with any other than the purest and strongest Christian aim; and yet this 'mark of your high calling,' if I may presume to borrow the expression of St. Paul, may gradually recede from sight as other and nearer and more glaring prizes come into view. The temptation will be strongest in the successful teacher; and I know not how it can be overcome except by habits of close intercourse with God. I cannot but remember that the very nature of your work and the qualifications you bring to it may increase the danger which I am endeavouring to point out; the danger of so losing the freshness of your faith in Christ as to become mere teachers of His words instead of witnesses of His person and glory. It has been stated already that some of you will have to do the most important duty of your vocation without encouragement, except it be celestial encouragement, the sympathy and counsel of the divine Master. You will also recall your college days, and bear within you the character built up amid the sacred associations of student life, its friendships, its Church fellowships, its inner conflicts and triumphs. These are sources of strength; but they are either divine, and accessible only to prayer, or they are simply subjective, and only to be

opened by reflection. In any case they do not come to you, but are found within you, and are not readily available except to those who daily cherish them. You will not want sympathy in the prosecution of your secular work; that will come from without; and if you are favoured with health, and are bent upon advancement, you will taste the sweets of success. I only fear lest the divine stimulus may fail before the more active and prevalent incentives of promotion. It need not fail, however exciting and distracting the transitions of your progress; and it will be an all-sufficient support if difficulties should make your path rugged, and disappointment overshadow it. If professional success hovers before you in mocking nearness, and refuses the eager grasp of your hand, the thought that you have received your teaching commission from Christ will lift your spirit above the vicissitudes of merely human work; for in His sight, who seeth not as man seeth, that may not have failed which men may choose to call failure.

I have said that we entrust to you *faith in God*, and charge you to testify it to the children of England. How necessary in the execution of this mission that God should be a living presence within you! First, on your own account. You live on the borderland of science. You have a popular acquaintance with natural objects and natural laws. You have acquired methods of calculation, by which you attain a much clearer, and, in this instance, more imposing conception of magnitudes and of periods—which, whatever may be said to the contrary, are the strongholds of infidelity—than ordinary people can command. When the atheism of the present day, under a scientific guise and borrowing an honest name, assails the creation of the world by one supreme Intelligence, and not only discredits the miracles of Scripture, but sneers

at those who accept them, you may have that measure of knowledge which lends speciousness to anti-biblical arguments, instead of the profound and accurate information which would enable you to refute them ; and this circumstance exposes you to the infection of the scepticism which penetrates the current literature of England. You must read as a professional duty ; you will read for the gratification of taste. I need not tell you that there are seductions in innocent literature ; where there is nothing to corrupt the passions or even to disturb them, there may be an immoral unbelief, concealed in the ambush of a fiction or in the spirit of an essay. There are no books so dangerous as those that lie unto us by assuming the lie as a truth which is universally admitted. The assumption shocks and confuses the unwary reader, confirms the doubts of the misgiving reader, and establishes the delusion of those who are abandoned to the error. It is most fatal when it shuns the form of a speculative argument, and pervades the treatment of another subject, the characters of a narrative, or the sentiments of a poem. In attempting to guard you against the perils of your necessary or your holiday reading, I am comforted by the reflection that you bring to your books a mind inured to the analysis of words and arguments, and that you will not easily become the victims of imposture. But Literature is a sorceress of infinite fascinations, and if she be in league with the heart, *which is deceitful above all things*, what wonder if the reason, even when fortified by knowledge and discipline, should be unable to resist their assault ! I therefore commend you to the care of the *Shepherd and Bishop of our souls*. He will not damp intellectual enjoyment. His oversight will encourage intellectual progress. He will purify and preserve the vision

which at your conversion was granted you of the heavenly Father who is above all and through all and in us all, and of your own immortality in Him. With Christ at your side, you will be safely piloted through the dangerous straits and quicksands of a modern teacher's career; and that which men call a profession will become the labour and discharge of a divine trust.

But not for yourselves only should God be a living presence within you, but for the sake of your charge. The schools to be committed to you will represent several classes of children, according to the organisations under which they are worked, and the neighbourhoods in which they are established. In some instances the school will be the single lamp of a district. There will be darkness in every dwelling, and from that darkness will come forth, it may be by the compulsory clause of the Education Act, little children into whose minds a thought of God has never entered, nor a thought of anything outside the care and hazard of finding food, and the necessity of escaping detection and restraint. No child you may pick up in any heathen land will be more alien from that which we consider mentally human, as distinguished from the brute, than multitudes of the little children of England this day! Many of these are the offspring of several generations, during the course of which the level of mind has never once risen above the brute border. And your school will put forth the first attempt, it may be for a century, to lift the thought and ways of a neighbourhood into the dignity of human ideas and human responsibilities. You begin at once to cut off the entail of ignorance, of poverty, and of crime. From whatever side you look at this work, its first benefits are almost immediate, its breadth of future blessing is grand. The spirit of a man is the candle of the

Lord: take that dark little mind and ignite it with the idea, *Thou God seest me*; send it back to its home with this touch of light flickering about its simple faith and its imagination, and you have conferred a boon upon your country, surpassing many of those achievements which have made legislators and warriors famous. It is the prerogative of light to impart itself without loss; and, thank God! it is not an uncommon fact in the history of the moral reformation of towns, that a school child has been the first light of a district which afterwards became studded with witnesses for God, for order, for temperance, for education, and for religion.

In schools which educate children of this class, where the teacher finds much to perplex, and little to help him, it will be his most difficult task to convey a distinct notion of *truth* and of *duty*. If he is wise he will not allow any elementary lesson to take precedence of this impression. It will indeed be his aim to awaken it, as best he can, if he be merely a secularist; for to do justice to those educationists who ignore religious faith, they inculcate the principles of virtue, and work in the direction of a high moral standard. But in your mind truth and duty are rooted in God. You may cut them off and graft them into a civil or political institution; and if they live there, they are kept alive by the religion that happens to survive in the traditions and social standards of that institution. It would not be difficult to prove and illustrate this statement at length if this were a suitable time for such a discussion. But for your sakes it is not necessary that our address should lead us into this side path. It is the constituent subject of your faith, and the ground-position of your system, that truth and duty have their spring in God. I repeat that,

as far as practicable, these ideas should precede all other lessons. The philosopher may smile that I should take a proposition so abstruse as that which affirms the existence of God, and attempt to present it in a form that shall be intelligible to a street child. Let the metaphysician, if he can, make the proposition clear to himself. When he has gone to the length of his plummet-line, and can sound no further, and, rebuked by the deep which is beneath him, he explores the other deep which is above him, and ascends upon the wings of his imagination until he has touched a region too rare for thought to be consecutive and useful to the reasoner, confounded by boundlessness in every direction in his search after *the goal* of truth and science, will not this be the result of his explorations? — ‘Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?’* The impression of your school child shall more than match that discovery! While the sublime thinker is vainly seeking God in formless and voiceless tracts of thought, the unquestioning babe has heard Him in the night: the Almighty has passed by the elder, and given the revelation to the child.

In attempting to command the ear of your youngest and rudest scholars when you are explaining to them moral distinctions, and striving to make them discern what is right in itself and what is duty in regard to it, and to set forth truth in thought as distinguished from expediency in action, you will succeed best and perhaps only at the moment when the imagination has been awakened by the idea of an unseen Presence, all-know-

* Job xi. 7, 8.

ing and watching over us all, the 'our Father' of prayer and of praise. I am satisfied, from a long and curious observation of children, that they are capable of apprehending, not merely a moral idea, but the authority and relation of moral truths. As a rule, their abilities are underrated, and in many schools this error leads to a much graver mistake. They are delivered altogether into the hands of junior teachers. It requires much skill to give the first formal lesson to a very young child, especially a poor child, whose mind perhaps has been made precocious by want, whose senses have been depraved by unnatural provocations, whose conscience has never been disturbed from its birth-sleep; and many such children will be placed under the care of those among you who will have charge of board schools. To examine the ground of a young mind, to select the spot upon which you propose to erect the edifice of the character, and to lay the first thought, demand the hand of a master-builder; other and inferior workers may help to raise the structure when this is done. But take care to provide for such a service the highest ability you can command.

In a former paragraph of this address, in speaking of your supreme opportunity of teaching when your pupils believe everything you say and approve everything you do, except when you punish them, I said that the teacher is the living book of the scholar. In that place I applied the observation to the matter of your teaching; in this place I shall apply it to the manner and spirit of your teaching. You, undoubtedly, will be the best read book in the school. Your personal influence will be indissolubly mixed up with every school study. Your actions will sometimes be a glossary to which the child will turn for the meaning of a word

denoting some particular duty ; at other times they will be a code of rules for deportment, or a grammar of taste. The manner of teaching resembles style in writing. If the diction be harsh or involved, the writer may be as wise as Bacon, as witty as Swift, he composes to no purpose. On the other hand, graceful and polished language will secure readers even where the information is meagre or the matter trivial. When the teacher stands before his class, the subject of his lesson is so identified with himself that the children unconsciously measure the importance of it and the need of it by the manner in which he handles it. He can enforce the most distasteful precepts with perfect success if his way of persuasion makes it clear that he himself lives in the practice of them. His sympathy, generosity, and earnestness can make the hard road of learning a garden-walk for little feet to sport upon. Whatever arguments he may adduce to prove a statement, himself will be the greatest reason for believing it. This remark is of universal application when the scholars are in the rudiments of their studies, but it bears more forcibly when the lessons relate to morals and to personal conduct. I introduce it, however, to show its bearing upon the teaching of religion. No instructor of children, if he has charge of them and they know him well, can separate the Bible lesson from himself. His class will regard it and him together. He reads or speaks of unseen things, some of them of appalling meaning. They will rush into the unoccupied fancy of the child, who will turn wistful eyes to the speaker to find out from his expression and manner whether they are true or not. To him they are not true, however clearly established, if there be indifference apparent in the teacher ; for that indifference will discredit them. I am not sure whether it would not be better in the

interest of religion itself to strike out the Bible from the *curriculum* altogether, than in the presence of impressible children to associate its awful revelations with irreverent or frigid teaching. You will not be surprised, therefore, to observe in me some hesitation in admitting that any important result will follow from reading a chapter in the Bible in a Board school by a teacher who does not believe what he reads; and this makes me pray that every State school in the kingdom may have within it a witness for Christ. The colleges we congratulate to-day may claim the support, not of the Methodist connexion only, but of all who wish prosperity to national education, for this reason, if for no other, that they educate Christian teachers for the schools of the nation.

I am sure you will bear with me if I entreat you to ponder deeply this personal argument and its place among other proofs in the demonstrations of a Bible lesson. Do not assume too readily that because you are believers, this argument will be the necessary adjunct of your expositions. You must take care that it shall be conspicuous, authoritative, and persuasive. I am afraid to say you should make it so, lest in the effort it should degenerate into a *style*. I will rather say, Live in so intimate a fellowship with the Sun of righteousness and with the blessed mysteries of his grace, that your look, your bearing, your very tones and accentuations shall be the visible irradiation of the light in which you walk. This evidence, powerful to all who witness it, captivates and convinces children instantly, because it is the figurative expression, and to them the reality, of the invisible world, and of the presence of Him whom you teach them to call Father. It will necessarily happen that some of you will not be able to devote much school time to Bible teaching.

Sorely against your own will you may be compelled to allot to this study the briefest space; and indeed to restrict it to a short public reading for the whole school, perhaps forbidden to elucidate it by a comment. But with the illuminating testimony of your spirit and conduct, even the reading of the Word shall be a revelation to the children; and opportunities to do more than this may be commanded out of school hours. In conceiving to myself the unspeakable importance of a school teacher's position, I have always connected his influence in the neighbourhood with his activity in the school. I once visited a village in which our day-school master and his wife seemed to have the intellectual and spiritual charge of the entire population. He was eminently successful in the school; but he gave all his spare time to the families to which his children belonged. He had been there many years, and had transformed a wilderness into a garden. He was the authority and model of the village in music, in science, in manners, in Christian work, in sanctity of life; the great enemy of the public-house; the terror of the swearer and the drunkard. Photography was an uncommon art in those days, but he studied it to explain the science of it to his school, and astonished his simple admirers by grouping them in pictures. I mention this to point out that our friend enlarged the vulgar definition of a schoolmaster's calling, and set it forth in grand and noble lines, bringing within it the functions of the broadest Christian philanthropy.

And now, dear students, I will release you from the attention you have given me. What I have said I could have wished better said. If I have awakened in you a higher conception of your duties by even one degree of elevation, if I have uttered words of encouragement in

the prosecution of a difficult but a great Christian and national work, my labour, humble as it is, will not have been in vain in the Lord ; and to Him shall be rendered the praise.

II.

LETTER

TO THE

YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE METHODIST
CONNEXION.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—It is in my heart to address to you a few words at the beginning of the new year; and as my voice cannot reach you, you must accept the remoter medium of the pen. Do not fear that this letter will be a sermon in disguise, a method of preparing for the taste what else would be disagreeable. Your good sense would not invite the artifice of a lesson sweetened for the palate; it will rather welcome the utmost frankness of expression. I will add that in this circular epistle I shall speak to all classes of the Methodist youth; the children of our families, of our schools, and of our congregations; both those who have united themselves with us in Church fellowship, and those who belong to us by the associations of the sanctuary and by the circles of the home.

Let me say, in the first place, that the hope of Methodism is with you. As a Church, ‘we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.’ There are several reasons, other than those which I am anxious to enforce, why Methodism should live on in you, and not die with us. Many among you have had a Methodist ancestry, and

will not be easily persuaded to snap in sunder the links of duty, of reverence, and of love, which, running back into your childhood, have fastened themselves to the earliest memories of home. But the consideration I wish to urge furnishes a stronger motive for adhering to Methodism than even the ground of family tradition. God has made us a people, 'and not we ourselves.' In the chief events of our history, the shaping movements of his hand may be as plainly discerned as the skill of the potter when the lump gradually becomes a vessel; and we shall not venture to say to him that formed us, 'Why hast thou made us thus?' Without presuming to conjecture what may be the ultimate form which our connexion is destined to assume, the heavenly Voice that drew together the first Methodists is the same which made St. Paul a minister to the Gentiles: 'I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified.' * The signs that followed the work of Mr. Wesley and his companions as clearly indicated the divinity of their call, as did the wonders which they wrought attest the mission of the apostles. They not only converted multitudes from the error of their ways, and diffused a new family life, but they changed the face of society throughout this kingdom. In the Churches a dead faith was quickened into life; in the nation public law gained more respect, and public manners lost much of their coarseness. It cannot be disputed that statesmen and magistrates have regarded Methodism as a new force of morality and order. We do not suspect that any change of outline into which

* Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

the Methodist Church may grow can change our mission to the world. We still live to turn men 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' The evils we were called to remove are still prevalent, and our numbers and organisation make us more able to deal with them. For us to dissolve now would be to withdraw from the reforming agencies of the world one of its greatest remedial forces. The reason of our existence as a Church cannot be denied while there are people living without God and without hope. We are passing away, and the work of saving a lost world remains to be done; instead of the fathers must be the children. And the children must take up the work: if they leave it, the dishonour will be theirs; for 'who shall declare their generation?'

Let me caution you against the unbelief of the age. Do not attempt to flee from it: look at it steadfastly, and it will flee from you. It assumes the aspect of science: but science is not unbelief; it is knowledge. There is a state of hesitation or suspense which is the natural temper of the scientific mind, and affords a kind of guarantee for the certainty of scientific facts. But this temper as a permanent habit has no business with morals and religion. To refuse to make up our mind to be godly because we are not satisfied with the alleged proofs of God's existence and of our own immortality, and to wait until death shall determine these questions for us, is absurd; for if it so happen that when we die, we live again, and stand face to face with God, we shall be convicted of the folly of not knowing him who really existed while we were doubting him, and at a time when, above all others, it was necessary we should know him. It is difficult to imagine that belief in God, and the conduct which springs from it, can have any place hereafter if they are not possible

now. What is now called agnosticism is intellectual atheism. Let not your simplicity be ensnared by an unusual word. It is a very ancient form of ungodliness. David describes the jargon of the agnostic of his day: 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?'—What proof have we that the first cause is an intelligent and personal being? This non-belief has ever been associated and identified with a loose moral condition. You will hear it said that in many instances the conduct of avowed unbelievers is irreproachable. But such conduct is not the fruit of unbelief; it is the result of the restraints of Christian institutions, and of the inheritance of Christian habits. Atheism has trafficked with the morality of theism; but has never herself originated a single moral lesson. The locomotive will run on the lines for a couple of miles after the steam has been shut off; but the steam which has escaped, and not the machinery, must be credited with the *momentum*. And if we all became atheists to-morrow, and the inspiration of faith were universally to die, we should still go on for a few years upon the smooth rails of Christian law and example by the sheer force of the life which has hitherto propelled us. But what becomes of society when that force expires? Consider it deeply, that those laws of authority and obedience which give sweetness and reality to freedom, and which create the charm and security of English homes, are the offspring of that religion which taught us to bow our knees 'unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,' and that when you part with this religion, the surrender of everything in life which you deem most precious is only a question of time. Look narrowly upon those faults that ruffle the quiet or blur the purity of home-life, and you

will trace their spring to those dispositions which it is the mission of the Christian faith to check and exhaust.

The sovereign remedy for unbelief is work. The religion that merely muses is apt to become sickly, because the most conclusive sign of its truth is found in its practical activity, in its fruits of goodness and help; and where this support is wanting, the mind is easily staggered by any 'wind of doctrine' that happens to sweep by. And how much work there is to be done! and how few there are to do it! The poor and the sick throng every path you tread; and in the inclosed ways and retreats of your own homes there will be an unceasing demand for the ministry of every faculty and grace you possess. Love will teach you the skill to relieve, and furnish you with the means to enrich; and this walking in the steps of Jesus will, more than anything else, make you conscious of the reality of his presence. Let me beseech you to devote yourselves to Church work: much of it can only be done when we are young, and the doing of it is the best training for the future and heavier tasks of life. Sabbath-schools call for earnest teachers; neglected neighbourhoods for visitors; boys and girls, uncared for, are drifting into vice and ruin. Some of you have special abilities and opportunities for service in fields like these. Moreover, there are duties which you can undertake with more hope of success than older workers. We who have the authority of years may scold vice, and reason with it, and threaten it; but nothing subdues it like the beseechings of childhood, whose rebuke is innocence and gentleness. Rough and savage men will take off their hats to a girl-visitor, receive a book from her hand, or, better still, the word of Christ from her lips.

I shall offer no counsel here on the selection of

books for study and general reading ; nor in regard to amusements shall I attempt to discriminate the harmless from the hurtful. Advice on these subjects, if it travel beyond the border of a very obvious propriety, is generally unsatisfactory, and therefore seldom invited. It is unsatisfactory, because it can proceed on no sure principle : it may chance make its way to the conscience ; but as often will it miss the mark. Give yourselves wholly to the Lord. When the heart is absolutely Christ's the judgment is a safe casuist in matters of taste. Everything unholy will be unlovely. Let me beseech you to become the enrolled followers of Jesus. Do not be led astray by the vulgar sophism, that it is safer to show friendship towards religion than to make a profession of it. The unworthiness as well as vanity of this position will be seen at once if you remember that religion is personal attachment to Christ ; that he commands his friends to make their attachment an open confession ; and that life has neither duties, nor cares, nor pleasures, apart from him. In fact, when faith joins our spirit to the Son of God, even the body is taken into the fellowship and becomes the outer shrine of the divine Presence.

There is nothing between this thorough adhesion to Christ and an open rejection of his claims, except that philanthropic patronage of faith which supports its public usefulness and declines to have any personal relations with it. This sentiment is so convenient, exacting from those who affect it neither the trouble of thinking nor the irksomeness of self-restraint, that it has become a creed among us, and passes for religion. Consider for a moment what it amounts to, and what it implies. I will venture to say that no satirist ever found a subject more congenial to the irony and banter of derision than the protecting air which many people

assume towards the religion of Jesus. That a life consumed by earnestness and love for mankind should be simply admired ; that it should be possible for a man, without being aware of its burlesque, to become the patron of Gethsemane, and the well-wisher of the Cross ! I am persuaded that downright hostility, honestly and consistently maintained, is less offensive to God than this nauseous parody of Christian discipleship. ‘I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.’* Shun, I beseech you, as you would the infection of a death-sickness, the character of a ‘supporter’ of Christianity. Give to Christ *mind* and *heart* and *life*, or give him nothing. He asks not that his sayings may be quoted, and his name used as the warrant of benefactions and the ornament of charities ; he claims a union with us in which there shall be no allotment of partnership, but in which all the action of the two persons shall be absorbed into one movement, while the separate consciousness of each is preserved. ‘I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’† ‘To me to live is Christ.’‡ Even in these days of scientific scepticism there is no argument against the faith of the Gospel so impressive as the indifference of those who are supposed to hold it ; and let this thought never be absent from your mind, that to stand apart from the Church, to hold back from a participation in the work, the responsibilities, and the fellowships of a public confession of your faith, is to give their sharpest weapon to the enemies of Christ. He was crucified by stranger hands ; but he was delivered into those hands by a ‘friend.’

* Rev. iii. 15, 16.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Phil. i. 21.

As I write these words to stir your minds, I remember that impressions are fleeting ; and that when we compel them to remain with us until they become the settled motive of resolution, even resolution is frail and is apt to break under us like a reed. Let me, then, lead you to the secret place of strength : ‘ Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.’ * The saints of old were accused of unmanly seclusion. In these days, life seems to have no privacy ; and piety, like a frightened traveller, snatches both rest and food as it hurries through its duties, as if a danger lurked in reflection and retirement. But if you would make sure of the ground upon which your faith rests, cherish the habit of observing a stated time, day by day, for the study of the holy Scriptures and for meditation upon God, as well as prayer to God. I have said that Church work is a remedy for unbelief ; but no work can be well done unless the faith and the heart of the worker be refreshed and ‘ renewed day by day.’ † You have no enemy more dangerous than the temptation that would filch from you the golden minutes consecrated to your private interviews with God. In everything else judicious solitude is the spring of open success. As a tree attains its strength and loftiness by the unseen and silent ministry of the soil, so great characters are built up in secret. May he who was wont to withdraw ‘ apart to pray,’ and to continue ‘ all night in prayer to God,’ ‡ put the spirit of his example within you ! and then neither the frailty of resolutions, nor the subtle dissimulations of self, nor the snares of thought and passion that waylay you in

* Matt. vi. 6.

† 2 Cor. iv. 16.

‡ Luke vi. 12.

books and in intercourse, shall be able to move you 'away from the hope of the Gospel.'

The new year will find many of us overweighted by duties yet to be discharged, by errors yet to be atoned for, by failures which have not been retrieved, even if their sin has been forgiven, and by memories which sadden the felicities of the season. In another sense than that in which the poet meant it, we 'drag a lengthening chain.' But to you the step of Time is light, swift, and joyous. We seem to linger behind in the past: you in your imagination live in the years to come. I would not have the prospect of your hope dimmed by even a thought of gloom. But let me exhort you to meet the new year with Him at your right hand, 'whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.' His presence will not mar the festival, but will give a meaning to its congratulations, a reality to its vows, a practical force to its lessons, and a crown to its happiness. There is laid up in the year for this poor world of ours great store of sorrow, of conflict, and of work. May Christ make for us the gladness of the first days, and this shall be our strength for the part that may be assigned to us this year in the never-ceasing advancement of good, and in the slow but inevitable conquest of evil; for 'the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever.'

III.

ADDRESS

ON

THE OLD AND THE NEW YEAR.

DELIVERED AT THE WATCHNIGHT SERVICE IN THE MORNINGTON-ROAD
WESLEYAN CHAPEL, SOUTHPORT, DECEMBER 31ST, 1880.

TWELVE months ago we entered upon the duties and the responsibilities of the year in this sanctuary. We committed ourselves with many penitent reflections to the forgiving love and covenant care of our heavenly Father. That period is about to close. It is now rounding off, and in a few moments it will be detached in the reckonings of human chronology. To bestow a few moments upon it while it is yet ours: to consider our relation to it, what we have lost in it, what we have taken from it, and what we still retain, is the wisdom of the present hour.

In one respect our relative positions as to time are the same. A year of life has gone. This is a circumstance of no mean importance even to the young, but to some of us it is an event of extreme gravity. We have one year less for work, and the year that has gone (gone for any practical purpose) found us with faculties which former years had been

maturing and preparing for work; or with declining powers, bidding us to make haste if any more work was to be done. It follows, therefore, that in either case the departing year has been more precious in value than any preceding period. But, whatever its worth, it is gone; and no honest and thoughtful man, however conscientiously he has lived through its days and weeks and months, can remember his own expenditure of its time without dissatisfaction and regret. He feels that what has been done might have been better done, that more might have been done, and that these drawbacks cannot fairly be described as inevitable, as if he were not answerable for them, but as adding to the already over-burdened fault of his life.

Time with us is not the measure of existence; we do not regard our personal life as a contribution of knowledge, of experience, and of example, to the sum reserved for future generations, we in the meantime dying into annihilation. We are immortal, and whatever we may leave behind, we are passing on to personal judgment, 'for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.'* The sentiment awakened in us when we think of the shortcomings of the year is not regret, but repentance. We have not been unfortunate creatures, but unfaithful stewards; and, *as no man liveth unto himself*, our life has affected for good or for evil the life of others. So that, if we consider our present situation in its proper light, a heavy deficit in the returns of duty and of work must be set over against us.

There is something very impressive and instructive, apart from its typical importance, in the annual confession which Israel was commanded to make of a

* Rom. xiv. 10.

year's sins, and in the discharge of those sins by the atonement of the scapegoat, that no reckoning on either side might disturb the balance of the new account. You may remember that a debtor's liabilities were placed on an innocent life, and he was free to begin the year guiltless; as if the life of the nation could not go on, as if it would be blocked, without this annual disburdening of its sin. Now, the type has given place to a real transaction; we have a veritable altar, the victim, the priest; and this is my exhortation, that we confess the sins of the year, placing the hand of faith upon the head of the Lamb that was slain and yet lives, in whom the Father caused to meet the iniquity of us all,* the privilege of which release is made sure to every one who believes.

This is the duty enjoined by the present service. It is true that we have an atonement every moment; and we may receive the forgiveness of sins at any time. But I wish to apply that historical passage in respect of the annual recurrence of confession. And in confessing our sins we need not be perplexed in any endeavour to order our speech before God, to single out our sins, and to count the countless before the Most High. The spirit of confession is what he himself demands; and the spirit of confession is the present surrender of the sin, the acknowledgment of its guilt, and the resolution of its absolute renunciation; and if in the depth of our souls we are honest, the old year's sins will go with the old year, they shall not pass with us into the new year. We shall take our sorrow for them; we shall take their results upon our person and character. We shall not be able to annul the injury which they have done to other people. But we shall not go into

* Isa. liii. 6.

the new year with guilt; and the thankful spirit of reconciliation when we know that our Father has nothing against us will be the best strength, the best kind of force by which we shall avoid the sins which we now confess, and be able to address ourselves to those duties in the performance of which we have been infirm or faithless in the past.

Who will go with me into the new year with a new heart? Who with me will avail himself of the offer of pardon? Who with me will put his hand on the Victim in the spirit of confession, and transfer all the sins of the year, that they may become Christ's, and that we may be forgiven? There is one feature of God which I think I understand more clearly than ever before. My experience, as I go on in life, seems to diminish the obscurity of my conception of God's love, especially in its application to a forgiving act. I did believe in former days that it was difficult to obtain it; I imagined that the forgiveness of sins must be wrung from a reluctant God: but I think I have a more correct view of it, as being prevalent as the air and as the light to every heart that will open itself for it, and that the impeding force in regard to the forgiveness of sins lies in the heart that must be forgiven, and not in him who imparts the blessing.

You who know the forgiveness of sins by experience, lift up your hearts! These are sources of humiliation which even forgiveness cannot exhaust. Christ is with us, going into the new year; the blood of sprinkling is the blood of the High Priest himself, and its virtue is prevalent now. There may be in this select congregation one, who is a stranger to God, drawn to this watch-night service, perhaps by the superstition that if it be seldom visited at other times, it may be well to close the year in the sanctuary; who

has never spent one hour with God during the year of all those hours which are now closing ; who has never yet done one act of which God has approved ; who has received the new compassions of the Father morning by morning, and night by night : for the year has been ‘crowned with lovingkindness and tender mercies ;’ and who has never yet lifted up one glance either of faith or gratitude, or even recognition : *living without God*. Thank God ! I can preach to that alien a free Gospel and a quick Gospel too.

I beseech you, then, by the mercies of the year, for, if you have not acknowledged them, there have been mercies sent to you from the beginning of the year to the present moment, I beseech you by those mercies to turn to the Giver, and for the first time during the year lift up the eye to God in worship with us ! I beseech you to remember that the new year upon which we are entering may be the last year of your life ; nay, the last direct opportunity of hearing the Gospel may be the opportunity of to-night. And if God has touched your heart, and you feel that you would like to commence a religious life, a life of faith in the Son of God, and yet that such a life presents to you mountainous difficulties that you cannot see through and cannot look over, let me remind you that when on a memorable night another stranger to salvation and one more remote from the apprehension of God than you can be, and hardly accessible to Christian ideas, cried, ‘What must I do to be saved ?’ the name of Jesus in that same night lifted him out of the ‘horrible pit’ of his superstition and made a pagan a witness for God. The Power that wrought that miracle is present this night to repeat it upon you.

IV.

ADDRESS

AT THE

FUNERAL OF THE

REV. W. MORLEY PUNSHON, LL.D.

DELIVERED IN BRIXTON-HILL CHAPEL ON TUESDAY,
APRIL 19TH, 1881.

I CAN hardly feel the reality, or apprehend at present the significance, of the event that has brought us together to-day, albeit the presence of the dead in our midst demonstrates both the one and the other to the sense and to the imagination. Before this last blow fell upon us, it had pleased God during this connexional year, which has yet three months to run, to smite our Church with several important bereavements, three of which are sufficiently disastrous to make the losses of one year memorable—the deaths of Sir Francis Lycett, of Samuel Coley, and of Frederick James Jobson. And now William Morley Punshon has been struck down in the midst of his work, in the fulness of his strength, and at a time when, of all others, as it seemed to us, his extraordinary gifts and reputation were demanded to help the Connexion in,

perhaps, the most critical period of its history. In each of the other cases I have mentioned, the stroke was partly broken by the premonition of its approach, but in this instance it descended upon us almost without warning. We were secure in our possession and in our hope at one moment, and in the next our house was left unto us desolate. There had been, as you are aware, considerable, we scarcely believed ominous, physical derangement; but there was no doubt in the mind of any one of us, including, I believe, his medical adviser, that perfect and prolonged rest would bring back to their wonted tone a heart strained to exhaustion by sorrow and care, and a mind overtaxed, not only by official obligations, but by engagements, made in fatal forgetfulness of self, to help everybody and every cause. We know now that the provision for repose, to which we compelled our dear colleague to consent, ought to have been made several months ago, and would have been made but for the stubborn reluctance with which he received every proposal to go out of harness, even for a week; and even his holidays were not seasons of relaxation, but variations of toil. His public movements were watched, his resting for a night in town or village was an event for the Methodists of the place; a service was exacted, and the largest hall was obtained and crowded with people anxious to hear the great orator. It was this tension of energy, never relaxed, never graduated to meet just the requirements of a service, for he gave out all his strength, whether the audience numbered five hundred or five thousand, it was this prodigal expenditure of force from a very early period of his remarkable career, and during a life charged with the excitements, the anxieties, and the vicissitudes of an unequalled popularity, that bowed down in the prime

of his might the Samson of our Israel. There is no ground for surprise at the event which has made the Connexion at home and abroad mourn as one man, and has pierced the hearts of multitudes who belong to us because they belong to Christ our common Head, and who share our loss in that a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel. We may rather wonder in reviewing calmly Dr. Punshon's course, and recalling the work which he did during a ministry of thirty-six years in this country, also in Canada and America, the quality of that work and its results, and remembering his acute personal sufferings, bereavements, and griefs,—griefs that eat into a man's heart and life, especially if he be a public man,—I say we may rather wonder that even strength such as he possessed did not under a strain like this collapse long ago.

In Dr. Punshon our Church possessed a rare gift from the Father of lights. His mind comprised two classes of faculties, not often found together in equal display, the imaginative and the practical; and an imperious intellect governed both, giving to the imaginative power a definite work, and to the practical a logical coherency and consistency. The surpassing endowment of his youth was memory, and it made his mind a vast storehouse of knowledge, much of it in the very word form in which it was acquired, like one of those *Common Place Books* in which the fathers used to amass the gains of their reading. He not only forgot nothing, but commanded everything he had learned. It is not unlikely, though of this I cannot speak with precise knowledge, that in the time of his earlier growth his memory somewhat fettered the action of his other powers; but these asserted themselves conspicuously in his later years, when called into use by the various responsibilities of official life. The gifts

which I have mentioned, when there is a commanding physique, make an orator; if education and opportunity concur, a statesman; if taste and the success of earlier attempts determine it, a poet. William Morley Punshon selected none of these professions; he was led by the star of Providence to the place where the young Child lay, and brought the tribute of his life, the gold, frankincense, and myrrh of his genius, and placed them at the feet of Jesus, all unconscious of the worth of his offering; and if he had suspected its value, he would have considered it too mean to merit the grace of his Lord's acceptance. The inward conviction of a call to be Christ's herald decided for him the nature of his work, and he became a Methodist preacher, the first and last distinction of his life. He aspired to no loftier place on earth than the Methodist pulpit, and it soon became apparent that God had raised up a messenger to the Churches endowed with exceptional power. I believe he had little professional training for the pulpit; but whether eminence were granted to him or denied to him, he purposed, by divine help, to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth. He knew there was no royal road to pulpit power; he knew that being called into the ministry the pulpit was the central position of his calling, and not a stepping-stone to something else. He was sometimes found elsewhere, but he brought with him the inspiration of the preacher, and rendered eloquent service out of the pulpit in the cause of the pulpit. But he would have deemed his life a failure, if not a mockery, if, whatever else had prospered, his pulpit had failed; and his most careful work, and his chief joy to the last, was preaching Jesus.

Dr. Punshon was eminently the servant of his

people. It was his pride, if I may use that expression, to represent Methodism in high places : to prove, in himself, and on behalf of his brethren, that God had not only called us to do evangelical work, but had raised up among us a ministry containing in itself, under the Head of the Church, the ultimate authority of a ministry. His attitude towards other religious bodies in this respect was an admirable example of independence ; all the more remarkable because his reverence for antiquity was sensitive and enthusiastic. This manliness explains in part his popularity among his brethren ; I say in part, because there was another prevailing charm in the genial and modest temper which marked his intercourse with other ministers, and in the absence of all pretension and flourish of power, making his great qualities even more conspicuous, as they were winning and accessible to all who desired to engage them. He did not mark his dissent from other Churches, or obtrude the peculiarities of his own Church when an unsectarian pulpit borrowed his defence on behalf of some catholic institution or society. I always considered his behaviour on these occasions an excellent pattern of dignity, moderation, and charity. His theme generally transcended party limits, and the claims of one Lord and the comprehension of one faith brought the crowd of many sects into the unison of one Church under the spell of this master of assemblies.

The bearing of his mind towards the sceptical spirit of the day was equally remarkable ; happily for the power and usefulness of his ministry he had no intellectual sympathy with doubt, but he had much sympathy with doubters, whose distrust was timid and tentative and anxious ; not because of any reserved questioning of his own, but mental solicitude of this

class appealed to his love of honesty and to his tenderness for distress. Moreover, his mind was too large and too generous to consider everybody in the wrong place who did not stand just where he stood, or who reached their standpoint by other steps than those which had conducted him to his position. In his own case, between conviction of sin and the cross of Jesus, he lost no time and no space, either by loitering in indecision, or by hesitation in reasoning. He went by revelation, which is the nearest way, and, in fact, whatever may impede us meantime, the only way; and he proclaimed a salvation not discovered by reason, but manifested to faith. He believed with a kind of untutored simplicity, and preached results rather than processes; he preached to the people and for the people; and although he sometimes soared high or dived deep, it was seldom in pursuit of abstract ideas. In such instances, he was generally following the issue of some well known thought into unexpected regions of consequence, demolishing the hopeless security of the sinner, or letting in a new light upon the spirit of the inquirer, or rebuking the unchivalrous infirmity of depression in the followers of Christ. But wherever his mind conducted his hearers he was never in a mist. He had built up his own style, and it was not another's; it was the visible image of his mind, a body that grew out of it, and not a robe woven for it. An imitator may take the picture words of this great preacher, and use them, and be unintelligible as well as ridiculous. He was never vague, let his language be ever so uncommon; his robust sense and unaffected earnestness made every expression contribute to the clearness and force of his meaning; and at times, when under the sway of strong feeling, his style assumed an extraordinary simplicity and compression and vigour. Many

of us will recollect that in preaching he had a habit of pausing at the close of an argument, or at the winding up of an eloquent declamation, and of turning to make a personal appeal to those hearers whose case he had been discussing; and suddenly changing the note of his voice he would begin a strain—methinks I hear him now—of pathetic beseeching, so melting, so imploring, so irresistible that you felt that even in this case it was not in word only, or mainly, but in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, and that the preacher had overtaken the souls he was seeking, and had secured them for his Lord. I remember one instance that occurred in this chapel, when he was standing in this pulpit, and pressing guilty men to look to the Lamb of God, when one of the most intelligent of his hearers ventured, as he presented the truth, to look up, and was saved. There can be no doubt that in this quiet way multitudes were delivered under the word which God gave to his servant, either receiving the bias of their first step from captivity to freedom, or the final assurance of their redemption.

I never knew Dr. Punshon intimately before my appointment to the Mission House. My missionary life had enabled me to appreciate the character of his services on behalf of missions; and I think that not even in the lecture hall—mighty as he was there—was his oratory half so impressive as when on the platform of a Missionary Society. The prophetic element of Missions fascinated him; it was just fitted to kindle his imagination; and then his sympathy on behalf of the heathen sitting in darkness, his grasp of detail, and his strong faith in the ultimate empire of his Lord; all these qualities concurred to make him one of the most powerful missionary speakers ever given to any Church. But I did not know how much heart was in this work

until in the close association of counsel and mutual responsibility I discerned what I cannot otherwise describe, though I use a very sacred word, than as the *travail* of his soul, when the details and stress of administration threatened to impede the advancement of missionary success. I heard him say playfully not long before his death, that he was risking the little reputation he had as a platform speaker, by perpetually dwelling upon the prosy necessities of finance. His later eloquence was certainly born of care and earnest concern; but even then he was not one whit less effective than when speaking under brighter impulses. So far as I could judge, from a very near and constant look, he was diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord: in work untiring, in co-operation not jealous of, but jealous for, his colleagues, making their character and honour, by almost clannish appropriation, his own. And to go back to the Mission House, to its vast responsibilities, in the present critical condition of its resources, and miss him! May God be our refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble!

The last scene of his life was brief. There was no evening, and not even twilight. His day was like a day in the gorgeous East, where there is no interval of dying light; the glory is shut up in a moment, and all is grey. Until within the last few hours he was not aware that his end was approaching, and yet he must have had intimations of it in his own mind. He had no fear of death, but he said to a friend who asked him if he had a fear: 'Oh the rapture of living! the rapture of living! I do not like to feel that my work is done!' Not long before his death he said to his medical man, 'Is this death?' The physician replied, 'Yes.' He rejoined, 'Thank God! Jesus is to me a bright reality.' I believe his last words were uttered to Mrs. Punshon,

and they were these,—‘Love Jesus, and meet me in his presence.’ So he went into the problem of life, and now understands it. ‘Absent from the body, present with the Lord.’ May our prayers be heard on behalf of the poor, stricken widow, that the God of peace may be with her at this supreme moment! and may the fatherless find in Him a Father! As a fitting close to this service, I will read an exquisite verse by which our friend, now at rest, enriched the praise of the Sabbath in our hymn-book; we will then offer it together in prayer:—

‘When by our bed the loved ones weep,
And death-dews o’er the forehead creep,
And vain is help or hope from men:
Jesus, our Lord! receive us then.’

V.

ADDRESS

AT THE

FUNERAL OF THE

REV. WILLIAM OVEREND SIMPSON.

DELIVERED IN EASTBROOK CHAPEL, BRADFORD, ON MONDAY,
MAY 23RD, 1881.

‘**I**F in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable.’ But we who live in Jesus shall sleep in Jesus, and rise again in Jesus. Sleep does not divide the family of God; for to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.* ‘One family we dwell in Him,’ whether we wake or sleep. But for this hope we should not merely have sorrow and perplexity to-day, but despair. I cannot find any expressions fitted to represent the mourning of our Society which during the last few months has been evoked by an unparalleled succession of bereavements, and which has reached its climax by this last stroke, following so quickly the blow which staggered the Connexion the other day. It seems to our earthly

* Rom. xiv. 9.

sense a violation of order that a man who last Monday was in our midst in the prime of extraordinary powers, working for good and against evil with the courage and energies of a giant, should now be lying before us in the posture and condition befitting the spent frame of age, and the end of a finished life. But the Father of lights, of the constellations as well as of the heavenly bodies of the Church, who holdeth the stars in his right hand, sometimes ordains that a brilliant and far-shining light shall go down while it is yet day. So it has been with the careers of William Morley Punshon and of William Overend Simpson. Masters of utterance while they lived, they have in death a power of speech more moving in its silent tones, more persuasive in its arguments, than the eloquence that commanded us while they lived.

I first knew Mr. Simpson in India in 1854. He resided with me during the early days of his missionary life. The character of his dedication was instantly apparent. We had an attractive English society in Madras, and the popularity of Mr. Simpson's ministrations, which drew to the chapel hearers of all classes and made a noise outside our own Church, might have flattered the vanity and divided the consecration of an ordinary missionary. But before he left college he had made up his mind—and when he did so nothing could move him—to be a messenger to the heathen. Preliminary reading about India and Hindu life had awakened his curiosity, touched his sympathy, and kindled his imagination; and he found the impression of the student infinitely surpassed by the realisation of the traveller and the missionary. And, disdaining to consult the inferior sentiments of self-complacency and the love of place, he obeyed the heavenly voice which said to him, 'Depart, for I will send thee far

hence unto the Gentiles.' He threw himself into mission work, and left behind him neither reservation nor regret. He first set himself to master the language of the people. I seem to hear his voice now—for his room was next to mine—trying to repeat after his teacher those strange sounds which contained in themselves the key that could unlock the heart of millions. He studied not merely their language but their faith, not so much in its philosophy and literature as in its current expressions. He did not neglect the writings of the *Shasters*, but he preferred to study Hinduism in the *Bazars*, in the festivals, and, so far as the foreigner is permitted to penetrate it, in the home-life of the people. He was a model missionary pastor. He allowed no race distinctions to mar his intercourse with the native Church. Neither business nor pride ever made him inaccessible to the poorest child of his flock. His heart was as remarkable for the warmth of its sympathies as for the breadth of its charities. Upon young men of rank, especially Brahmins and others of that class, his life acted like a charm. They are shrewd readers of character, and the union in him of great talents with unaffected humility, the blending of the authority of the teacher with the simplicity of the child, was a feature which they had not been accustomed to associate with a proud Englishman; and their reverence and love for him secured their following when he conducted them to the Shepherd of souls. I do not think that even Dr. Duff or Mr. Anderson produced a more vivid personal impression upon their converts than did Mr. Simpson on the young men whom he was instrumental in bringing to Christ.

When after ten years of ardent and happy labour—labour whose fruits remain to this day—in Trichinopoly, Manargudi, Negapatam, and Madras, Mr. Simpson

returned to England, as it was hoped, only for a brief holiday, it pleased Him who giveth no account of his ways, to decree that the missionary career of this labourer in the foreign field should fail in the latter harvest of its promise; for when on the eve of returning to India, to resume the work which of all others he loved best, the health of Mrs. Simpson gave way, and there crept slowly on, in ever-deepening shade, that terrible darkness which enveloped the following years of his family life. Crushed by the overwhelming pressure of a double collapse—first of his missionary hopes, and then of the light of his home, he bowed low at the footstool of the throne from which he had received the command and credentials of his first commission, and said, ‘It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good.’ You know as well as I do that this was a trial of which little can be said; and no one except his children, and the few who formed the inner circle of his relatives, can appreciate the nobleness of his unconquered faith in God and his undivided obedience to the divine will.

His first English circuit was Hackney, though he had laboured for some months previously in Manchester. He was appointed to Hackney in 1867. His fame had preceded him, for his speech at Exeter Hall that year had placed him in the front rank of platform orators. It was a memorable meeting. The Lord Mayor of London was in the chair that year, and the chief speakers were Wm. Arthur (who was President), W Morley Punshon, Charles Garrett, and W O. Simpson. The peroration of Mr. Simpson’s speech on that occasion was one of the most chaste and exquisite passages of eloquence that even an Exeter Hall audience had ever listened to. His success as a circuit minister was immediate, and never failing. His cha-

racteristic feature in the pulpit and on the platform was force, and this was sometimes overwhelming. His physical temperament was a restless spring of life, and in many respects that temperament determined the expression of both mind and heart. His most striking faculty was imagination. It was wild as the fancy of a child, and yet intensely rational. He saw an object at once, saw it in all its aspects, the grotesque equally with the grave; and it was copied into language with the suddenness and fidelity of a photograph. With the same quickness he put it to any use he wished it to serve—illustration, analogy, adornment. There was a roughness in his manner, and what appeared to be an unstudied style of handling his subject, that hardly prepared the hearer for so fine and chastened an inspiration of poetry as that which sometimes characterised his sermons and speeches. His reasoning power was second to his imagination, but the faculty was vigorous and manly. He was not skilled in school methods of argument; he had his own way of constructing a proof, and striking it home; and he seldom missed his mark. His reason and imagination troubled themselves little about processes of preparation. They went quietly on their way, carrying everything before them. As a preacher he had the pre-eminent advantage of being a childlike and happy believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was full of faith. He never reasoned with the Gospel; he reasoned with sinners: the Gospel was his message. He was not disposed to justify or to apologise for it. He proclaimed it, and was a little less patient with the unbelief of the day than some of us are disposed to be. He took pains with the honest inquirer, and found a genial task, as many of you know, in helping the timid spirit to take heart, and venture on Jesus. He

assailed a mocking and flippant scepticism with a power of ridicule and sarcasm which I have never seen surpassed. There was no anger in it; it was too triumphant to be angry. We all remember that facial expression of grim comedy which was the prelude of his terrific banter in dealing with those whom no other weapon would reach. It reminded one of the destructive irony of the prophet of Carmel.

There was another power in this many-gifted minister which of late years impressed a new feature upon his circuits, and upon his general work also. He was a man of business, an eminent utilitarian, a man studious of results. He believed in the power of the sermon, and in the power of the speech: but he regarded that power not so much as an instrument of personal impression, as the initial force of practical action; and he came down from the pulpit and from the platform, not to retire to his study to muse upon what he had done, but to take the lead in carrying into the world the philanthropy of the Church. There was no line of work to which he was indifferent and for which he had not some appropriate faculty. His loyalty as a Methodist preacher was without spot, but his large heart carried him far beyond the boundaries of connexional limits. He studied the condition of the working man—his temptations, his rights, his frailties, his powers; and by lectures, readings, and speeches, and by the promotion of a healthy, popular literature, he sought to carry the *promise of the life that now is* into the homes of the people. And he never forgot to insist that this promise is inseparable from *the life that is to come*. His labours in Sabbath-school work present another illustration of the versatility of his mind and of the practical aim of his ministry. The Sunday-school Union has lost one of its most zealous and ablest

supporters. His voice and pen were devoted to its service, and few men among us had more thoroughly mastered the great Sunday-school question in its relation to the Church. During the last few years he acquired considerable influence in Conference debates. Had he lived there is no position among us for which he would not have proved himself an eligible candidate. He was beloved as well as admired by his brethren, and there is scarcely a department of Methodist administration which his death has not impoverished.

The loss to our Missionary Society is not so easily reckoned. It would have been less if Dr. Punshon had been spared : but that the missionary cause of Methodism should lose, within the interval of ten weeks, two advocates like the senior secretary of the society, my lamented colleague, and Mr. Simpson, each, on a missionary platform, in his own particular style without a rival in oratorical force and popularity, is a connexional reverse which cannot be measured, and which, happily for us, happily for the Methodist Church of the past, has had few if any parallels ! Mr. Simpson would have been an eloquent defender of missions if he had never laboured in foreign fields ; but when he stood before us with the authority of a witness, and when his personal testimony was invested with the charm of narrative, of incident, and of story, recounting the efforts, the vicissitudes, and the triumphs of missionary life, he presented a perfect example of the missionary apologist. But God's work depends upon Himself, and not on the instruments He appoints to direct it. This is the lesson of the hour, and just now it is a hard lesson. God help us to receive it ! The strength of a Church will be in proportion to the sentiment which governs the selection of its ministers ; and if when we have carefully prepared

them, we ascribe the excellency of their power to Him only who fashioned them, and lent them to us, then we may be strong in the hope that their succession will never fail. If these sudden and appalling strokes of discipline bring the Master of all nearer to his people; if, while companions and co-workers are falling around us, we can in a clearer light see Him standing in our midst, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*, and hear the words by which he once aroused the lethargy of Israel's grief over the fall of its leader, 'Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest,'*—we shall not have been smitten in vain. The account of our dear and lamented brother's decease can be given in a moment. There was an indirect premonition of the event last year; but it was so slight that, but for this fatal consummation, it would have escaped serious notice. In Mr. Simpson himself there was no perceptible abatement of energy or of intellectual vigour, and, I regret to say, he permitted himself but little indulgence of rest. His latest efforts in public exhibited his mind and character in undiminished lustre. A few moments before his death he delivered an able speech on the Schools' question. Then the work was done. There was not even the briefest summons to set his house in order. It was translation rather than death; a moment's space between the presence of his brethren and the presence of the Lord!

The last note I received from him was in reference to some arrangement respecting his eldest son, who was accepted at the last Conference as a candidate for the ministry. Instead of the father we have the son. God

* Josh. i. 9.

bless that young man, and make him a worthy successor of the dead ! God visit the mother and the children in their affliction, and fill with his guardian care and love the vacant place of the husband and the father !

VI.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE ANNUAL EDUCATION MEETING HELD

IN EXETER HALL, APRIL 6TH, 1881

(UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE LORD MAYOR).



A PART from the propriety of assigning to your lordship the presidency of this meeting this year, the committee could hardly have selected for their chairman a truer or more practical friend of popular education than yourself. As a Methodist layman in the front rank in influence and in counsel, you have known this Wesleyan education movement from its beginning, and have marked its steps of advancement in Methodist opinion and in Conference legislation until the attainment of the position which we report to-day. There have been many changes since the time when the Conference sanctioned our first plan of day-school education in 1841 : but on two questions there has been no change whatever, even in a Body so liberal in its provision for independent thought as Wesleyan Methodism. First, the question that relates to the basis of primary education, that this should be laid in the religious conscience of the children ; and, secondly, that which

concerns the rights of the subject, that freedom from the intolerance of sectional bigotry should be secured by an adequate conscience clause. On those two questions there have been no divisions amongst us; we have been *perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*. We have watched the action of the government from time to time in relation to these questions with steady vigilance; and when we have thought legislation either insufficient or obstructive, we have made our voice heard, and we think our influence felt, not only on behalf of Methodist work, but in the promotion and support of those great principles of religious toleration and fair play all round, without which a great system of national education cannot possibly be built up. When the government bill of 1870 brought the education question into a new position, we were compelled to admit that the voluntary efforts of independent bodies could never overtake the necessities of the nation; that outside the remotest limits of Churches and Charities there were millions of English children, whose pagan ignorance was a reproach to a Christian realm; and we hailed the auxiliary of the Board school. Some of our friends thought that the advent of that institution would mark the close of voluntary effort; that the history of Wesleyan day-school education had reached the last paragraph of its last chapter; and that since the government had taken up primary education, other labourers should withdraw and leave the field to the State. It was a happy thing for Methodism that the Connexion did not take that step. The Roman and Anglican Churches would have been very much obliged to us if we had adopted that view, for its practical result would have been to transfer to them a considerable share of the gains of thirty years of hard

Methodist schoolwork ; they would immediately have entered into our labours, and have farmed our babies for us without any weekly allowance whatever. But we loved our children too well to part with them. We thought there was just the possibility that we should never see them again ; and so we kept them, notwithstanding the risk of receiving less for their support under the new system.

We were, however, under the operation of another principle than the instinct which prompted us to take care of our own. We drew back from the proposal to surrender altogether to a government department the education of the working classes and the children of the poorer families of this country. If the Churches were to sit still and fold their hands, while the children of their congregations, in immense numbers, flocked to Board schools, I am afraid the education imparted in these institutions would be practically atheistic. As it is, with the voluntary movement running side by side with the State movement ; with Christian schools rising up in all directions to testify that the Bible is the precious inheritance of the primary school ; with the weight of Christian sentiment and representation brought to bear upon her Majesty's Council of Education, and upon the bye-legislation of the school Board, too little Bible truth is conveyed to the poor man's child ; and if the Churches were to retire from popular education there would be none ! Let it never be forgotten that thousands of these children have no religion in their homes ; that from one week's end to another, the name of God is never heard within their circles, except to give point to an oath, or profane coarseness to a joke ; and that, in many cases, there exists the most brutal insensibility to religious motive of every kind. To have no divine law enunciated

in the school, the only school which these poor children ever attend; to have impressions rectified upon other subjects which it is necessary a child should know, and to leave untouched a child's natural impression of God, which I take to be rebuking and dismissing that impression, to unroll before their eyes the page of knowledge, as the poet describes it, 'rich with the spoils of time,' and to erase the word 'God' from that page wherever it occurs, and to insert the word 'law,' is to perpetrate a huge fraud upon the unsuspecting credulity of the children of England, a fraud prolific of calamity to the future of the nation. I must lift up my voice once more against the delusion that there is an appreciable moral force in mere knowledge. The task of acquiring knowledge disciplines the faculties, and the knowledge acquired multiplies the sources of pleasure, and increases the power of work; but it does not inevitably make a man conscientious, humane, benevolent, unselfish. It may refine reason, it cannot dethrone passion. It may clear out one devil, the devil of ignorance and grossness, but only to sweep and garnish the mind for seven others more wicked than the first. Who are the prime movers of the execrable *Nihilist* conspiracy? I speak not merely of the wretches who dog the steps of monarchs with dynamite, and who secrete their devilish compounds under the windows of high places. They are the mere tools of nihilism; but I speak of the chief conspirators of the system: they are scholars. I blush for culture as I think of it: they are students of science and of art, they are editors of journals, and they consecrate their accomplishments to scientific regicide. There are good kings and bad kings; there are systems beneficent and systems pregnant with disaster: but these intellectualists who 'say

in their heart, 'There is no God,' and no hereafter, and in whose estimation the life of a man has no more sacredness than the life of a dog, do not attempt to reach their ends by teaching and by the dissemination of knowledge, but by foul murder, at once unscrupulous, indiscriminating, and cowardly. Education is a frail defence and guardian of morals; and I rejoice that there is still in this Christian England—and God grant that it may remain with us to the end!—the old-fashioned reverence for the Bible, and a witness to its necessity and efficacy in many a Christian school, that shall convey a leaven of religious sympathy to school Board deliberations, and secure for that blessed book a place in the *curriculum* of school studies. As you, my Lord Mayor, have reminded us to-night, many of the Westminster and Southlands pupils, when we have not vacancies for them in our own schools, will obtain positions in Board schools; and these students, from their known character and training, may well be trusted to impregnate the teaching of these institutions with Christian truth, and to hasten the day when every child in England, poor as well as rich, shall learn, as his first lesson, that *the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord*.

VII.

ADDRESS

AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE

WESLEYAN-METHODIST MISSIONARY
SOCIETY,

HELD IN EXETER HALL, MAY 2ND, 1881.

THERE is one part of this resolution, my Lord Mayor,* to which I can speak with the authority of personal knowledge. A somewhat intimate acquaintance with the manner and the results with which our work has been carried on during the year enables me to confirm the statement of the report that that work has been prosecuted with vigour and success. I am almost afraid to trust myself even for a moment to dwell upon the reference in the Report to the bereave-

* The Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman William M'Arthur, M.P., presided.

The resolution was as follows :—

‘That the report, an abstract of which has now been read, be adopted, printed, and circulated under the direction of the Committee; and that this meeting, whilst chastened and saddened by recent bereavements, is nevertheless gratified to hear that the work of the society has been prosecuted with vigour and success during the past year, and again offers thanksgiving to almighty God for the blessing with which he has been pleased to crown the labours of his servants.’

ments which have depressed the spirit of this anniversary. You yourself mentioned names which will awaken in the minds of all feelings of the deepest interest: Sir Francis Lycett and Samuel Coley, Mr. Samuel R. Healey and Frederick James Jobson; and the absence of another so recently in our midst, whose name is one of the bright traditions of this Hall for the service rendered by his incomparable eloquence to religion and philanthropy, whose supporters are accustomed in this place and during this month to review their work and to advocate their claims—I say his absence is like an awful and sudden collapse in the programme of our proceedings. Dr. Punshon helped to make the arrangements which we are carrying out to-day. He hoped and feared with us, but with a restless solicitude peculiarly his own, as to how the Society's accounts would appear upon the balance-sheet, and as to the effect of the meeting to-day upon the revenue of the new missionary year. He joined us, his colleagues, when in mutual confession and prayer we strove to roll our too heavy burden upon the Lord; and there can be no question that the weight of that burden hastened the departure from among us of one of the truest, one of the noblest, one of the bravest and best sons of the large Methodist family, and one of the shining lights of the catholic Church. But we should be doing, in my judgment, great injustice to our beloved brother if we permitted dejection to be the keynote of this Meeting. We are 'perplexed, but not in despair.' We are 'cast down, but not destroyed;' and if our eulogy of the services of the departed take the practical expression of renewed consecration to the work which he loved and in which he died, we shall offer that tribute to his worth by which he himself would have chosen to be remembered.

I am asked to move the adoption of the report. If this resolution pass I trust that the people will read the report and study it; study it with the reports of similar organisations to get a complete view of what the Redeemer is doing in the world, and what the Churches are doing to overtake the zeal of the Redeemer. I have studied these reports, and there are two difficulties which are made clear to me, and upon these I will dwell for a moment or two, if the patience of the meeting will permit me. The first difficulty, of course, relates to finance. The pressure of this trial is relative; relative to the breadth of the field occupied by a Missionary Church, relative to the kind of work which happens to be suffering from the retrenchment of support, relative to the nature of the deficiency in the income of the Missionary funds. In our own case the field, it is of no use to deny it, is larger than our present means. It is the glory of Methodism to report a wealthier revenue of faith than of money. Our fathers began this work without any money at all! Those who tell us that the affairs of this society ought to be conducted upon the sound commercial principle of an assured capital would never have consented to place this great work in the very uncommercial firmament of faith, and hang it upon nothing. But this is what our fathers did. I have sometimes marvelled at the sublime audacity of the founders of this society in measuring out for us, with the coolest disdain of geographical limits, remote islands and vast continents, and without any exchequer behind them commanding us to go up and take possession. They believed that the faith which converted the simple and vagrant hosts of Joshua into irresistible troops and successful invaders of the promised land was not an extinct principle. And if we do not agree with them, what

business have we here to-day? Our fathers were men of shrewd sense. Judging from the conversations that have come down to us, the quixotic element found little favour in the councils of Methodist preachers. True, they had no certain income which they could reckon up from dividends or investments; they had not one farthing in consols or in the three per cents.; yet in spite of all, they went into debt with great courage, and they remained in debt with great tranquillity. I remember a curious instance of the childlike simplicity with which they corresponded on the exigences of finance. In a passage from a letter, indited just eighty-two years ago, addressed from the English Conference to the Irish Conference referring to the Irish missions, which at that time were in difficulties, we have these delightful assurances and these remarkable explanations, 'We have met all your liabilities, although we have had to borrow £1000 to meet our own.' That £1000 was no liability at all! Where is the explanation of this? They had an endowment worth more than half a million in the funds; an endowment secured to them in the wealth of Methodist people's hearts and Methodist people's faith; and it will go hard with this society if we substitute for the endowment of sympathy the endowment of capital. I shall not be understood, my Lord Mayor, to mean that even a spiritual society like ours can be administered in defiance of the ordinary principles which govern income and expenditure. On the contrary, money which is a free-will offering, much of it given by the poor, made poorer by their gift, is a holy thing; it is sacrilege to touch it lightly and to spend it recklessly: and I am here to affirm, with my colleagues around me, that never in the administration of your Mission funds has so great care been exercised in the spending

department as at the present time. Our danger has almost gone over to the other side. During the last two years we have cherished the spirit of economy and the spirit of saving, until it has come to pass, that if a stranger should enter one of our committees he would imagine that the staple of our business, as well as the labour of our deliberations, was retrenchment. It is not so, but he would imagine it to be so.

You must permit me to say that there are other subjects entrusted to a Missionary committee beside finance, of equal, if not superior importance; and we wish for a little more leisure from the harassing duties, cares, and threatenings attendant upon inadequate income. Questions are continually submitted to us, which we have not time enough to consider, affecting the legislation of particular districts and the policy of administering them; and in countries like India and China, where, in spite of our non-political position, the government is continually crossing the path of the missionary, when on such occasions our brethren ask us for counsel, and it may be to accept the responsibility of *quasi*-political action, the result of our decision might involve the gravest issues. It might be the arresting or the missing for ever of a supreme opportunity of advancement, as in the case of our recent occupation of the Nizam's dominions referred to in the report; or it might be the destruction of many years of hard missionary schoolwork, as is feared by the recent changes in the education policy of the Madras government, or it might be the safety of a brother's life and freedom, recently imperilled in the province of Canton. We cannot administer the pregnant affairs of your great society by sitting down at home discussing costs and inspecting vouchers like the vestry of a small parish. We must be on the field with the

men we send out : with them in an intimate knowledge of their ground and their work ; with them in sympathy with their enthusiasm and their trials ; with them—and as a missionary I have often felt the comfort of this—in the assurance of a pledge that, come what may, you will stand by them. But we cannot, as a Secretariat, and as a Committee, discharge these high functions unless we are free—I will not say from the anxieties of financial administration, we can never be free from these but—from the embarrassments of threatened financial collapse ; and we should be unworthy of the confidence of this Connexion if we were not half paralysed by the restraints, the necessary frustrations and apprehensions imposed upon us by an income totally insufficient, as you have heard to-day, to meet even the ordinary needs of our work. We are not unobservant of the fact, that this society is only one of several departments of Methodist labour ; we do not forget that, in addition to the leading claims of the Connexion, every circuit has a local burden to carry, and is sometimes heavily laden with it : but the Foreign Missionary Society is the earliest and the noblest charge upon the support of the Methodist people ; it is your first love, and you have not left it yet.

I have heard it said that public sympathy with missions is beginning to flag ; I say that I have heard it, and, more important still, I suppose, I have read it in print. There is another rumour, very much like it, with regard to public interest in *preaching* ; but I believe that this grave judgment means no more than that the public have no sympathy with a sermon which is wanting in life but is not wanting in length, and that the public manifests the smallest possible emotion under a missionary speech which is destitute of missionary facts. I affirm that our congregations

are neither slow to listen nor slow to respond when the missionary argument is fairly adduced and supported by the testimony of current missionary history. And if I am not mistaken, this Hall to-day will send over the Connexion at home and abroad as true a ring of enthusiasm as ever struck upon the ear, or compelled the acclamations of former Exeter Hall gatherings. I am therefore encouraged to believe that you do not wish and that you do not intend that those to whom you have entrusted the management of your missions, should waste their energies and contract their opportunities by the incessant dejection and worry consequent upon large annual deficits. I said that our field was too extensive for our present means. We ask you to help us to reach, by adequate occupation, the limits of our present field. We ask you to arrest retrenchment by practical expressions of sympathy, by infusing new vigour into your local organisations, and, above all, by pushing personal sacrifice to the requirements of your duty to Christ.

And now I should like for one moment to rise from financial straits to another difficulty of a very uncommon character, which the young men of former days never saw in their visions, and their fathers never conceived in their dreams. During the last forty years, through the marvellous activity of missionary organisations, the new territory acquired by Christianity has surpassed in extent the entire field of her old possessions. That is to say, if you take a map of forty years ago, and line out the geographical limits of the Christian faith, and compare this extent of country with continents and islands and districts in continents traversed and, to a certain extent, possessed, since that time by the religion of Jesus, the new accessions cover a wider field than the old. But the Christian map of forty years ago was

the Christian map of five hundred years ago ! no new territory for Christ during all those centuries. I leave the significance of this fact to those gentlemen who foretell the early collapse of Christian aggression ; and I shall prefer for the present to accept the prophecies of the first century rather than the predictions of the *Nineteenth*. But the difficulty that I want to point out now, and that which demands the gravest consideration at this moment, on the part of all missionary organisations, is the present stage of the operation of Christian faith and Christian truth in the new territory. There is universal disturbance, and you are answerable for it. There is no collusion to account for this coincident agitation. Wherever you have sent your missionaries there is an upheaving and an overturning of existing conditions. You have touched with your ethereal Gospel the tribal life of the southern islands of Tonga and Fiji, and that life is now developing into national form : in the throes accompanying the earlier growth of a people there is a higher class of conflicts, a higher class of sufferings, a higher class of sins ; and the uncomely aspect of these struggles is now used to discredit you. You have hidden the restless leaven of Gospel truth in the native mind of Southern Africa. What are the African people contending for now ? They are contending for rights and institutions which your teaching, without being political, has defined, and your missionaries, without being politicians, have illustrated ; they ask, and they have a right to ask, to be lifted up from serfdom to brotherhood. I wish our great and noble England, on which you pronounced a warm eulogy in your opening speech, would bring to a perpetual end her inglorious conflicts with small African tribes. I wish that England, in the presence of half-civilised barbarians, would doff the dress of the soldier and the conqueror,

and teach her humbler friends the use of the pruning-hook and the ploughshare. I wish that England would remember that her vast power was given unto her by the God of nations to raise the fallen by the truth and by the arts through which she herself attained her pre-eminence. The position of England is unique among the nations; she is not a great military empire, and I hope she never may be. We do not wish her to assemble millions of armed hosts in rivalry with Russia and Germany and France. Her place among the nations is to be the instructor, the patron, and the shield of small, struggling, half-enlightened peoples. She is the missionary nation to the earth, to proclaim liberty to the captive, to open the prison doors to them that are bound. God has directed her paths hitherto, because many among her best—all of her best—have acknowledged Him in their ways. God forbid that this country should ever cease to acknowledge Him who built her up! I do not believe she ever will. Even if the Commons of England agree to banish the name of God from the oath of their obligations, the English people will continue to subscribe themselves by the name of the God of Jacob.

And then, to pass to a third and last example of the disturbance you are making: you have shaken to the basis of its faith the intellect of India. You have done it with abnormal swiftness. The people have not reached this change by the usual evolutions of history, in which the new gradually assimilates itself to that which is permanent in the old, and the revolution is effected without disturbance; for in this case the people of India have discovered, without a day's warning—using that expression 'day' as we compute the age of nations—that the ground upon which her confidence has reposed for ages, upon which for ages

her holiest traditions have accumulated, and upon which the structure of her society is built, is a vast fiction, which is now yawning beneath them! I maintain, and I think the meeting will agree with me, that as we have shocked them by this first discovery we are bound to lead them to another discovery, where the staggering mind may find sure footing. You ought, if possible, to let the second revelation be made as rapidly as the first. You cannot; that is impossible: and yet the consequence of keeping a whole people in the midst of forsaken temples, of gods stripped of their renown, and of discredited traditions, is past all conception. I hesitate not to say, although I am a missionary of the Cross, that a condition of intellectual ferment and tumult like this, following suddenly upon an organised religious belief, and a society founded upon that belief, without a leader, and left to the wild shaping of its own impulses, unsettling everything and settling nothing, is far more mischievous to the societies affected and to mankind, than the faith and the usage which it destroys but cannot replace. I suppose that Ireland is now the parliamentary problem, but for many years India was the crucial problem of parliament; and India is becoming the difficulty of the missionary Church. I shall be accused of an enthusiastic exaggeration when I say that there are many thousands of Hindus this day who are prepared to follow a certain lead; and the question which now presses upon us and upon all missionary societies is this, how to affect speedily a commanding proclamation of the Gospel; how so to disseminate the glorious news as that the manifestation of the Son of God shall follow without delay the disconcerting influences of the education which is now revolutionising India, before the agitation has experienced any of those frightful

issues of which I see the beginning in Calcutta and Bombay, of atheism in creed, licentiousness in life, and all lawlessness in morals; how to exhibit Christ, the Lord and Master of all mind-storms, and the only way to a peaceable habitation and to quiet resting-places! I cannot touch upon China and Japan, where the partial spread of Christianity has also awakened intellectual and political distraction; but I have said enough to prove that the Missionary Churches, if they are not prepared to follow up their work, ought not to have begun it. If they say that at the Master's bidding they put their hand to the plough, then at the Master's bidding they must not look back. If we do look back, if we now slacken our hands, and allow present results to drift into forms of national unrest and national license, as they assuredly will do if they are not pushed on to their legitimate completeness, Christianity will be charged in your name with a failure that shall furnish the infidel with the strongest possible argument against her divinity. But if, on the other hand, there be an earnest resumption of activity and sacrifice on the part of missionary, Bible, tract, and evangelical associations; if there be no more pausing and flagging, a speedy and a ripe success in the new territory which we have won for Christ will bring back to old Christendom a testimony to the faith which will stagger the infidelity of Europe, and silence the taunts of the scorner, the haughty doubts of the sceptic, and the unworthy misgivings of the Church.

SERMONS.

I.

‘LET US HOLD FAST OUR PROFESSION.’

A SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE CONFERENCE ON SUNDAY
MORNING, AUGUST 2ND, 1880, IN CITY-ROAD CHAPEL, LONDON,
AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONFERENCE.

*‘Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the
heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.’—*
HEBREWS iv. 14.

THAT which we profess or confess, let us bring it within our grasp, literally have it within our power, be masters of it, and hold it fast. The action is distinguished from merely touching it, regarding it from a distance, looking at it. But the action supposes that what we confess is capable of being grasped. It is substance and not shadow : not an idea which, like nebulous matter, changes its lines of form every moment ; not an hypothesis by which we take the Christian faith and assign it, *ad interim*, to some cause which may appear to explain it ; but *truth* demonstrated to be truth by proofs upon which all truths rest.

Our profession is a group of facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth. It is not necessary in making our acceptance of these facts a profession that we should fully comprehend them ; for we fully comprehend

nothing. There are common truths, which we never doubt and upon the certainty of which we risk our life every day; yet many of us could give but a lame account of our reasons for believing them. The facts concerning Jesus to which I refer are arranged for us by St. Paul, in the 15th chapter of his first Corinthian epistle. They are—

1. That he died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

2. That he was buried.

3. That he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

4. That his resurrection was proved by a force of testimony far greater than that which is required to meet the conditions of ordinary belief.

These truths St. Paul designates the Gospel: he himself had received them, he was satisfied with the evidences upon which they rest, and he delivered them to the world, demanding for them the rational credence which follows a fair and conclusive examination. It is to be noticed that in this statement of the proofs which underlie the Gospel the writer does not include the supernatural argument, what he calls, in another place, the *demonstration of the Spirit*; * as if he would challenge for the alleged facts of his Gospel a strictly historical investigation.

No man was more familiar than St. Paul with the extraordinary illuminations of the Holy Ghost; no writer so frequently insists upon these helps as belonging to the complement of the great Christian argument: but in dealing with unbelief, he invariably shows that there is no *primâ facie* case for it; that

* 1 Cor. ii. 4.

while the inner life of the Christian disciple belongs to the world which eye hath not seen, the truths which stand at the entrance of that world appeal to the ordinary faculties of sense and reason.

Herein lies the responsibility of the unbeliever. The faith which admits us to the presence of the supernatural is a divine gift. No one of his own will can command it; and yet the natural man is confronted with this dreadful Scripture, *He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.** There must be a reason for this condemnation, and a reason intended to be apparent to those who are exposed to it. For this is not one of those strange acts of God of which he gives no account. He never threatens and punishes men in the dark. He is justified in the sight of men in sayings of this character, and clear when he is judged; in other words, he overcomes when his dealings are called in question by men. Here, then, is the justification of God, in this instance of punishing those who believe not. *Faith cometh by hearing.* The man who refuses to hear, who declines from whatever motive to accept the opportunity of listening to the Gospel argument, must be held responsible for all the consequences of not having the faith which comes by listening. Every man can hear the Word; can hear it with an earnest desire to find out whether or not it is true. He is answerable for what is within his power; and the fair and sincere hearer places himself at the entrance of the supernatural world, and receives the help of those influences which raise the mere act of belief into an apprehension of the living Christ, a trust in him for salvation, and a personal fellowship with him. The Spirit

* John iii. 36.

of God is as near to a man as if he were an incorporated faculty, and wherever there is the honest will to listen, there is in close attendance the grace to believe.

You will gather from what has been affirmed of the responsibility of the unbeliever that there is that in the Gospel by which, if he chooses, he is warranted to examine its claims, and to which, whether he chooses or not, he is bound to give earnest attention. I refer to the historical basis of our profession ; and, following the example of St. Paul in the fifteenth chapter of his first Corinthian epistle, I shall show that the very existence of our Christianity depends upon our holding this fast.

It is necessary at all times, but especially in these days, to insist upon the position that history and not sentiment lies at the foundation of our faith. It is true that religion is spiritual life and the outward expression of that life, rather than the acceptance of a *creed*. But this is only half the truth ; and by not giving its due prominence to the other half, we have sometimes played into the hands of our enemies. We have been apt to put the historic miracle of the Gospel out of sight, as if we were afraid to subject it to criticism. There is a disposition to speak of it apologetically, as our least defensible argument, as something which we ourselves believe with difficulty, and which must not be understood to be our strongest foundation. Let us, it is urged, stake our defence upon the Christian's life, as set forth in model in the career of Jesus, and in imitation in the moral elevation of his people. Let the argument for the Gospel be placed upon the fact that the morality it produces is purer in kind, and loftier in summit, than that of any other religion or philosophy.

When we adopt this line of defence, and throw into the shade the argument of the objective miracle, the scientific rationalist finds it an easy task to dispose of us. He will vie with us in admiration of Christian morality; he will lecture in strains of surpassing eulogy, as did the infidel Romanist the other day, on the matchless purity of the inimitable Nazarene. But what is signified by this? That the verities which you and I regard as more ancient and more deeply laid than the pillars of heaven, are the fancies of a sweet Galilean vision. We do not invite plaudits like these for our Lord and Master. The hosannas of infidelity are an insult to the Son of God. To extol him first and then extinguish him is the homage of the purple robe and the toy sceptre before the crucifixion.

Let us be careful of this new snare of atheism, wherein she hides from us the fell purpose of her ministry, and captivates the unwary by a cloak of discipleship, professing that the difference between her followers and us is one of sentiment rather than argument; that the same high aims are common to both, the moral education of humanity; in other words, that there is nothing to grasp and hold fast.

Brethren, it is time to speak out; it is better for all, even at the risk of disturbing cherished associations, to look steadily at the issue to which the acceptance of modern rationalism would bring us. It asks us to surrender nothing; by accepting it we surrender everything. If Christianity has no historical basis our profession is a dream. If Christ be not risen, there is no Christ, there is no Bible, there is no dead; our preaching is vain; your faith is also vain; for they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

* 1 Cor. xv. 13-18.

Brethren, in speaking thus, we do not think lightly of the argument of Christian character, we esteem the life of Jesus as depicted in the Gospels a priceless boon to the world, and an indispensable evidence of the divinity of our religion ; but when you make it unhistorical, you take from it the secret of its power, you strip from it at once its claims upon the credence, the homage, and the respect of mankind ; you forget that the force which you ascribe to it is born of its historical authority. Whatever good has been done in and through the name of Jesus since that name was first known, has been done solely through the belief that it was a real name, that it represented an historic person, and an honest, matter-of-fact history. Herein is the cardinal distinction between Christianity and the faiths of paganism. These are cunningly devised fables ; an idol is nothing in the world : but our God is in the heavens. Remove this distinction, and Christianity is paganism. The fact is not altered in the slightest degree by the superiority of our faith in every possible quality of advantage, if it have not the foundation of truth ; and to distinguish ourselves from idolaters, and our religion from superstition, is an intolerable conceit.

If we ponder this deeply it may move us for our own sake, and for the sake of our children, in view of the glory of our maligned Master, and of the salvation of the world which he has redeemed, to tighten our grasp upon the profession of his name.

Consider, that is, study nothing else except in subordination to him, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. We must hold him fast ; not his character, as the best among many patterns of excellence ; not his teaching, as the wisest among many lessons ; but *Himself*, as the personal and ever-living Redeemer, whose words are an everlasting utterance ;

whose work is not a passing service, a single contribution to the progress of mankind, but the restoration to truth, to purity, and to God, of all the generations of men; and whose presence is not a memory, the transmitted dream of an enthusiastic discipleship, but an unchanging personality, with all the attributes, affections, and sympathies of personality.

I shall probably be met here with a question which rises in many hearts, but seldom attains the formal expression of the lips. 'You ask us to hold fast our profession. We desire to do it; we envy those who can do it; we do not cherish doubt, though intellectually we sympathise with it; but the objective miracle of the Gospel, the resurrection of Jesus, to which you give an historical basis, and which we acknowledge to be the central verity of our faith, is to us a stumbling-block; not an insuperable one, not always a formidable one; but it lies in our path, the ready occasion of questioning when we are in the mood of reconsideration and conjecture. We cannot forbid and we cannot dismiss seasons of unbelief. A scientific lecture or treatise or conversation has the unhappy power of reviving doubts which we thought had been slain, and renewing a conflict in which we are too frequently mastered; and, to be frank with you, you do not help us by reiterating the exhortation, Hold fast your profession. What shall we do to make our faith gripe it, and hold it fast?'

The writer of this epistle indicates in the text the source both of direction and help. 'Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.' The conflict of the Hebrew Christians resembled very closely the modern struggle of faith. They staggered at the miracle of the resurrection of

Jesus. Some of them before their conversion were Sadducees, who repudiated the supernatural, denying the immortality of man and the spiritual world. Others were Pharisees, also fervent and indiscriminating disciples of Moses, who saw in the gorgeous ritual of the temple the consummation of religion, whose hopes were dazzled by material conquest and the dream of a military Christ. The Sadducee in embracing Jesus became the inhabitant of a new world; against the traditions of his school, the education of his home-life, the prevailing sentiment and tone of his companions, he accepted the miracle of Christ's resurrection and was risen with Christ, no longer making his bodily perceptions the sole authorities of his belief, but living under a new order of senses, expatiating in an unseen Jerusalem, and, instead of remembering the dead and the perished, walking and communing in thought with the spirits of just men made perfect. The ritualistic Pharisee, in stripping off from himself the stole of a gorgeous symbolism and putting on the Lord Jesus, saw in his position and life a revolution almost as complete and marvellous as that which had changed his Sadducean friend. No examples of the power of the Gospel can be imagined to surpass such conversions as these. But you can readily suppose that where the change was imperfect, or the convert was subjected to persecution on account of his new belief, the temptation to reconsider his ground, or to regret it, would be a perpetual trial and not infrequently a grave danger. Several instances of apostasy had been reported to the writer of this epistle; and it is too evident, as well from the argument of the entire treatise as from the terrific warnings and appeals of particular passages, that these scandalous defections had induced a decline of spiritual life, and a relaxation

of doctrinal precision and firmness, that threatened to break up and scatter the Hebrew Christians.

That part of the New Testament which is most fitted to meet the necessities of the modern Church is the Epistle to the Hebrews. The truths to be maintained at all hazards, the mental condition in which these truths are allowed to slip from our grasp, the temper or frailty which brings us to that condition, and the means of recovery from it, are set forth in their respective situations with striking vividness, so that no one can miss seeing them, and in so weighty and solemn a style as cannot fail to hold our attention and awaken our solicitude. The question, which we have imagined to be asked by some of you, had been proposed by the Hebrews, What shall we do to make our faith seize the verities of the Gospel, and hold them fast? The writer was too great a master of his art to attempt to strengthen their faith by parading the steadfast character of his own, and reiterating their duty to believe as he did. He leads them by the road of an irresistible argument, into which he makes converge all the old paths of symbol and of tradition, to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. Jesus, the personal object of their faith, shall teach them the way to hold fast Himself. The apostle does not say, Seeing that you have so conclusive a testimony as that by which I have proved the truth, seeing that you have such examples of firmness as the apostolic pillars of the Church, hold fast your profession; but, Seeing that we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, not away from you and your cause, but having finished the priestly sacrifice on earth to begin the priestly intercession before the mercy-seat; separated from you by a veil which to him is no veil, in personal and intimate communion with every one of you, not re-

presenting your condition as a people or a Church, but making the cause of each member the subject of special presentation; not drawing a line between the believer and the earnest inquirer, as if the latter must first get himself into a state of faith before he could claim a recognition, but having upon the large breastplate of his office the name and state of the weakest, the unhappiest, the most despairing.

The apostle anticipates a doubt whether this can be a correct account of the heavenly work of the Messiah, by pointing out to his readers and to us that their own high priest under the law was taken from among men, that as a man he might understand the wants of other men, and that it was his special business, not to select for his study and care and admiration the strongest examples of his charge, to weed out the frail and the worthless in order to promote *the survival of the fittest*: but to have compassion on them that were ignorant and out of the way; and that his own weaknesses, his struggles against his own unbelief, and his temptations to sin, qualified him for his office. And we, said he, speaking on behalf of Jews and Gentiles, have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. We need not here discuss the source of Christ's temptations, any further than to affirm that that source was human nature. He was the King of sufferers, mental and bodily.

The question whether he ever doubted is answered by the fact that he was human: he had a human mind; a mind that grew in power and in knowledge; and doubt belongs to the process of growth. But he never doubted his divinity, the Godhead of his divine nature; he never doubted the reality of his mission; he never doubted his Father's word; he never prayed in doubt.

He knew doubt simply as provisional, a voluntary suspension of our judgment for a time, in order to come to a more clear and sure conclusion. This state would be familiar to him as his mind stepped on from acquirement to acquirement. In no other sense than this could he have doubted. But this was sufficient to make him understand as a man the nature of intellectual conflict: the desire to know the truth, its eagerness, its impatience, its liability to selfishness, and to corruption from other emotions such as ambition and the mere vanity of progress; he could distinguish between the doubt that comes from the wish to doubt: the doubt of darkness that never issues to the light but leads us always further from it, as illustrated by the question of the Jews: 'How long dost thou make us to doubt? if thou be the Christ tell us plainly;' * and that other kind of doubt which is born of the light and which aids in a certain sort to produce light in its turn, as set forth in that cry of honest perplexity, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.' † If, then, the holding fast our profession involves intellectual conflict, seeing that we have a great High Priest who understands the nature of the struggle, the temperament of the mind that is resisting doubt, the pressure of the doubt in each particular case, and who possesses the resource within himself of such evidence as any mind may require for restful assurance, let us bend our spirit to the trial, and reckon upon it that Jesus will help the infirmity of our reason, and abundantly afford every other aid that may be necessary to insure victory in the good fight of faith.

And here it should not be forgotten that He who helps us to hold fast our profession is himself the subject of our profession. The historic facts and the

* John x. 24.

† Mark ix. 24.

revelations which he assists us to apprehend, relate to his own person and work. Let us put this statement into a personal and familiar illustration: I am striving to understand and grasp for myself the meaning of the death of Christ, to accept as the ground of my faith the resurrection of Christ, and my own salvation as purchased by his death and attested by his rising again. These wonderful miracles astonish and bewilder my natural sense. I believe them, and yet this faith is so unlike ordinary belief that it is constantly liable to the disturbance of reconsideration. The power of apprehension and intellectual acceptance in this case seems to be a new faculty, governed by other laws than those which conduct us to ordinary knowledge. I sometimes believe without an effort to acquire belief. I sometimes doubt after the most painful labour to make doubt impossible; I am tossed about to and fro, between the lower and the upper kingdom of thought, too ignorant to know whether I happen to be in this element or in that; in an unnatural position like Peter, when walking on the deep to go to Jesus.* I say unnatural, because Peter ought to have been swimming or sinking; but he was held up above ordinary laws by the Author of law, and yet only so long as his attention and confidence were placed on Jesus. When, instead of looking at the divine Person whose power was sustaining his strange goings upon the deep, he regarded the power of the storm—for you may remember that the sea was tossed with waves and the wind was blowing a gale when this wonderful scene occurred—then Peter was afraid. The distraction of faith brought him instantly under the sway of ordinary

* Matt. xiv. 29.

laws, and he would have perished but for the quick rescue of the Lord's mercy. Seeing that I have a great High Priest whose office it is to take charge of my progress towards Himself, whose own person is the profession I am striving to grasp and retain, who knows with exquisite precision and absolute comprehensiveness my physical and spiritual nature, I will fix my mind, my inner eye upon him, and upon him only, and upon him always. This looking unto Jesus, while it gives me a supernatural position upon the depths of the unknown, enabling me to walk with firmness where unassisted reason would not be able to go a step, nay, would sink into gulfs of contradiction and paradox, does not disturb the harmony of my other faculties, nor suspend the function of any one of them. Peter's action was as natural as if he had been moving on dry land : he was not borne along, he walked, but he walked by faith ; by a belief that Jesus was able to make his feet rest and move even upon a wave, and that he would do it because the Lord had given him permission to come. Peter confided in the ‘Come’ of his master ; and the result justified all that his simple, artless, and affectionate confidence reckoned upon. When his mind was drawn from Christ, his common sense instantaneously reasoned upon his situation, and as suddenly he was like a man who had fallen into the sea. Stand fast upon the deep mysteries of the Gospel by looking unto Jesus and by moving towards Jesus. Reckon upon the sympathy, the tenderness, the fidelity, and the purpose of his ‘*Come unto me.*’

II.

‘I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED.’



A SERMON ON THE DEATH OF SIR FRANCIS LYCETT, DELIVERED IN
CITY-ROAD CHAPEL ON JANUARY 26TH, 1881.

‘For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.’
2 TIMOTHY i. 12.

A PECULIAR and precious interest invests this second Epistle to Timothy, because it contains the last written utterances of the author. St. Paul having preached the doctrines of Christianity for thirty years against every conceivable form of antagonism, it is important to learn the latest views of the preacher : and for us especially ; for the time in which we live is remarkable for intellectual adventure, for the boldness with which men reconsider their old beliefs, and the readiness with which they modify or abandon them. The motives for intellectual activity in this direction are so prevalent, that the circumstance may be considered one of the characteristics of the age. It is indeed regarded as an indisputable sign of the advancement of learning and science. A man who does not change his views is supposed to lack the vitality of growth. He is a dead branch of the great human tree ; he represents an extinct organism. Language

of this kind meets us so frequently in certain circles that it seems to have become the sing-song or cant of those who use it.

It is admitted that there are certain persons who never change their views. They have never reasoned themselves into any opinion. They acquire their notions and impressions by simple adoption, and are too indolent, or too timid, or too feeble, to revise them; and the world owes little of its progress to these. But is the world much more indebted to minds that are never still, that cannot accept any position as ultimate and unchangeable, that rebel even against the axioms of reasoning? What is progress? Is it the flux of change, the to-and-fro motion upon a deep all unknown? or is it the winning of steps on a definite line of march? Leaving the modern thinker to dispose of this problem as best he can, the philosophy of Christianity is based upon truth that can never give place to more advanced positions. Our views of truth are not stationary; these are continually changing, but the change is not in the truth seen, but in the perceptions of the spectator. He changes his standing place; approaches nearer the object, or looks upon it from a higher position. The first step of the Christian is belief in Christ, and ever after that the movement of his mind is in the direction of Christ. If his devotion be enthusiastic, he will quickly pass through his elementary impressions and attain distinctness of conception, dropping his errors as he goes on, as faith shakes itself free of symbol, and boldly trusts the warrant of the word of promise.

Paul's mind was in this state of progress for thirty years, and under these two conditions: *first*, the perfect knowledge of Christ, if that were possible, was the ambition of his life; ‘I count all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* *Secondly*, he commanded every help, divine and human, necessary for the attainment of it. 'I certify you that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.' † A mere surface acquaintance with St. Paul's life will make it clear that he professed to live in intimate fellowship with Christ; and his long intercourse with the chief companions of Jesus helped to make complete in his mind the lineaments and manners of the fairest among the children of men, enabled him to learn what they had learned, to know their impressions of the ascended Lord, and to compare notes with them.

It is a mistake to suppose that this intense and progressive study of the person of Christ was peculiar to Paul, a matter of temperament, or the result of his extraordinary conversion. It characterised the spirit of Peter, and the inspiration and teaching of John. Nay, more, both these apostles make the knowledge of Christ the goal of Christian hope, and the substance of Christian life. The former warns his converts against *idleness* in the knowledge of Christ, ‡ and exhorts them to grow in that knowledge; and the

* Phil. iii. 8—11.

† Gal. i. 11, 12.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 8.

epistles of St. John are so pervaded by the expressions, the word-signs, of a minute intimacy with Jesus, that they might have been written while the two were together, and the hand of the scholar was simply holding the pen for the composition of the Teacher. 'Truly,' said the divine penman, 'our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.'* Let me add, just here, another remark. These apostles did not consider Christ as a teacher to lead them on to God, but as himself the ultimate object of knowledge, and therefore as himself God. Had he been less than deity, St. Paul could never have counted all other things, all other knowledge, but loss, 'for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,' as he designates him in this passage.† Therefore, weighing all these considerations, it is a subject of the deepest interest to inquire what were Paul's views of Christ at the end of his life, after thirty years of study, and such study as a mind like his was inclined or compelled to give. His conversion happened in his early prime, and his daring and impetuous nature was not tamed by the event, but etherialised. We must expect that during the first period of the change his love for Christ would glow with a white heat of intensity, and that his language would glitter with the radiance of the Damascus vision. But these first fervours had time to cool. He did not take them into a cloister and nurse them in solitary devotion; nor did he guard them by forming about himself a circle of like-minded disciples, whose sympathy and admiration would shelter his convictions from the cold. Within four years after his baptism he was plunged into a sea of strife, and in the tossings of that sea he lived and died.

* 1 John i. 3.

† Phil. iii. 8.

We cannot pretend even to guess what were St. Paul's views of Jesus of Nazareth when the revelation of the Son of God to him was new and untried; but whatever they were, I can conceive of no circumstances more fitted to test the first impressions of conversion than the many-coloured events of this apostle's career. He travelled far; he encountered many races and nearly as many religions; he became familiar with the hard atheism of Athens and the polished licentiousness of Corinth. Human nature, regarded as an exhibition of power, has never been seen in greater splendour than at the time when Paul beheld it in Rome; and this splendid greatness was essentially *antichrist*. His Gospel was the prophecy of its overthrow; and the peculiar revelations of that Gospel awakened the ridicule of the science and scholarship of the day by their monstrous improbability, and evoked the hatred of the masses by the uncompromising purity of their laws. But in addition to assaults of this nature, straining his intellectual hold of Gospel doctrine, there was sometimes a perilous strain upon his personal attachment to the Cross. He refers to this several times, and in one passage so eloquent and so moving that it is difficult to read it without tears: 'In stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold

and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the Churches.’*

I have quoted this celebrated extract at length, to make as full and accurate as possible our representation of those circumstances under which a man’s early impressions of himself, of his beliefs, and of his life-work change, if they change at all. In the case of Paul, was there any change in his knowledge of Christ during many years of eventful experience? Yes; for this was the motto of his life: ‘I follow after, if that I may apprehend,’ or grasp the prize, to obtain which Christ grasped me. ‘Not as though I were already perfect.’ I did not obtain perfection at my conversion; even now I count not myself to have grasped the prize. I am ‘reaching forth unto those things which are before; I press toward . . . the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.’† But the change was not displacement but advancement, not revision but growth; and in this Second Epistle to Timothy, written on the eve of his martyrdom, when, as he himself says, he had *finished his course*, we have the consummation, in regard to his knowledge of Christ, of the intellectual and spiritual following of a life; his prayers, his rapt meditations and visions, his supernatural illuminations, his continuous study of the Word of God, his abounding trials, his intercourse with illustrious saints, his vast knowledge of mankind, the results of all are condensed into these last utterances of the departing apostle. And what do we find in the character of his dying testimony to Jesus? It might be expected that age had abated the ardour of his imagination; that his judgment had attained perfect sobriety; that his think-

* 2 Cor. xi. 23—28.

† Phil. iii. 12—14.

ing power, and whatever other faculties comprise the understanding, were mellowing in ripeness, and free from the disturbing force of the passions. What, I repeat, is the witness concerning Jesus of 'Paul the aged,' the scholar, the man of the world, the saint, the inspired teacher and apostle? As for the tone of his mind at this time, it may be learned from the context: 'God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.'* Now, in the first place, when he speaks of Christ in this epistle, there is no symptom of hesitation, or doubt, or change, or caution, in any one of his references. His descriptions of the personality of the Son of God are as firm, as vivid, and as sympathetic, as in any of the passages of his earlier letters. Let me cite the following examples: 'The Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.'† 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.'‡ 'I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'§

But, in the second place, his prophetic spirit discerned an approaching peril, when faith in Jesus would lose its distinctness and relax its grasp: 'For the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.'|| I confess I am deeply impressed by this anxiety concerning doctrine and fidelity to it, which characterises the last warnings

* 2 Tim. i. 7. † 2 Tim. iv. 1. ‡ 2 Tim. iv. 8.
 § 2 Tim. i. 12. || 2 Tim. iv. 3.

of St. Paul. It is only by holding fast the form of sound words that we can attain that definite and personal knowledge of Christ which was the experience of Paul. *I know whom I have believed.* We do not merely believe a truth; we know a person. If we simply know a truth concerning a person, it does not unite us to that person. We only possess that truth, or rather our apprehension of it, which may be inaccurate and must be imperfect. But if we know the person himself, whatever truth concerning him it may be necessary to know we receive from himself, either personally disclosed to us or observed by us. We have in his presence an abiding guard against misunderstanding, and a never-failing supply of new knowledge. The true disciple of Christ believes in the atonement of his Lord's death, and in the justifying fact of his Lord's resurrection. But he knows the Lord himself concerning whom these events are recorded; and his imperfect knowledge of them grows by communion. The abstract testimony of the word, He died for us, becomes a personal revelation, I died for thee. And this revelation is not nakedly given; there comes with it the power to understand and appropriate it. When the natural eye cannot see it, and the untrained ear cannot catch the sound of it, and the heart is unable to imagine it, the spirit of Jesus brings a resurrection power into the dead soul, and all its senses and faculties are awake to the stir, the harmonies, and the life of a new world, the kingdom of the unseen; and Jesus in his Spirit dwells in the quickened mind, to shield its new life, to strengthen it for fresh revelations, to render help, comfort, and assurance when it is struggling with any power of darkness or any stupor of death that may be lingering within it. We have believed Christ, his words, his

engagements, his acts ; but we *know* him. The word which St. Paul has selected to convey his meaning signifies, not merely intellectual knowledge, but familiar acquaintance first. How fondly does St. John dwell upon this personal knowledge of the Redeemer, and upon those signs and proofs which made this knowledge sure ! We declare unto you, not one who dwelt among us, and passed away at death, leaving with us simply the evidences that he had been, and who is now a blessed memory, but him who was from the beginning,* and became incarnate ; whose humanity was real and immortal ; whom we saw after he was risen—for it is to this period the apostle is alluding—whom our hands handled, a reference to our Lord's words to his doubting followers, 'Handle me and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have ;' † at whom we gazed as he ascended up,—him declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship, not with those antichrists who are endeavouring to persuade you that the Jesus whom we preach is no more, but with us ; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The everlasting Word dwells in us by virtue of his incarnation. There is a danger of our refining away the glorious humanity of Christ, not by any modification of our convictions, but by dwelling more upon the word than upon the person of Christ, and by not resting upon the word with earnest and prayerful study, a temper which would keep us close to the person of Christ : but the word, the doctrine concerning Christ, being nearest to the understanding, accommodates itself more readily to the ordinary tone of devotion, and offers fewer difficulties to faith. This may be religion ; it

* 1 John i. 1.

† Luke xxiv. 39.

may by the comprehension of language be styled a fellowship with Christ. But it is not the fellowship which was defined and enjoyed by the apostles. It is a word fellowship, a sentiment fellowship, little more than a remembrance, or, at most, a dream of Christ. A piety of this kind, made up of shreds of Scripture, and snatches of sacred song and Church melodies, and habits of decent, but for the most part unthinking worship, is like a condemned ship cable, useful in fine weather, but can never be trusted to bear the slightest strain. Is it any wonder that the winds and currents of doctrine which are just now trying so severely the steadfastness of our beliefs should have driven many from the moorings of the Gospel, and have caused them to wreck their faith upon some uninhabitable coast? I believe that nothing will stand the perilous tension to which the faith of the Christian is subjected in these days, but ‘*Christ in us the hope of glory.*’

‘To the haven of thy breast,
O Son of man, I fly!
Be my refuge and my rest,
For oh! the storm is high.
Save me from the furious blast,
A covert from the tempest be!
Hide me, Jesus, till o’erpast
The storm of sin I see!’

Have you noticed that the apostles and their followers in the moment of extreme or final pressure, when everything was giving away around and beneath them, clung to the person of Jesus? It was the vision of Stephen when standing before the council who were about to deliver him to the executioners, *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.** And a few minutes after, when

* Acts vii. 56–60.

the agony of a horrible death was upon him, he cried, for himself, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' and for his murderers, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.' St. Paul also, foreseeing the near visit of the headsman, writes to Timothy in a passage I have already quoted, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.'* And the sum of all the doctrines, of all the promises, of all the hopes, and of all the supplications, expounded, confirmed, cherished, and presented, is *Jesus coming again*, and *Jesus longed for*: 'Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.'† May it please God, who hath called us by his grace, to reveal his Son in us! And if this revelation has been given to us, and is not now with us as in days past, if the Son of man has faded into the shadow of a Scripture or a symbol, and he dwells dimly or doubtfully in the chambers of imagery, scarcely distinguishable from the phantom forms of the departed, may He come back again in the distinctness and reality of a personal presence!

The individual character of our communion with Jesus is pointed out not merely by the intimacy of personal knowledge, but by a definite and complete covenant transaction. 'I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.'‡ Paul lived in the habit of placing everything under the guardianship of Christ, to be kept by the great trustee 'against that day.' To his own care the apostle reserved absolutely nothing. However trifling the item in itself it was an integral part of a great property. As to the way in which it

* 2 Tim. iv. 8.

† Rev. xxii. 20.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 12.

would be kept, as to the question whether the Guardian would himself classify into estimates the various kinds of property of which the estate was composed, St. Paul did not in any way concern himself. The one thing of which he was persuaded was the fact that he would lose nothing. We venture, though with reverent hesitation, to apply to an inferior covenant the words of Jesus respecting his Father's will, It is the desire of my servant ‘that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.’* The apostle expended his life, to find it again unto life eternal. The disappointed wish was put by and carefully stored for future fulfilment; the travail of his soul would have its dual satisfaction in the perfect heaven. The trials, the sufferings, the calamities of life would be an investment for *the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. The great trustee not only keeps but transmutes the property. Like the sowing for the resurrection God giveth our life a body as it hath pleased him. ‘It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.’† As the life was spent for Christ, it became Christ's deposit. ‘To me to live is Christ; but to die is gain.’‡ And here is the infinite comfort of this investment, I am *persuaded* that he is able to keep it. The persuasion will be difficult of attainment if we do not invest all. To reserve anything for our own disposition and guardianship is to introduce into the transaction the element of uncertainty and confusion. The entire possession must go into the Lord's hands intact. And, blessed be his name! he does not forget our infirmities; he does not allow us to live merely upon the naked act of the

* John vi. 39.

† 1 Cor. xv. 43.

‡ Phil. i. 21.

transfer; he remembers our frame, our proneness to be perpetually reconsidering what we have done; our temptation to reopen the whole question upon any suspicion of sincerity, fidelity, or worthiness. He not only guards what we have entrusted to him, but he watches over the confidence by which we were able to do it. He feeds this confidence by foretastes of glory; he sometimes goes so far as to transmute a portion of the deposit before the day comes. We commit to him a sowing of tears and humiliation and unthankful toil, and he vouchsafes a kind of first-fruits, an earnest of our life's harvest. More than this, and in a less formal manner, he has a way of showing us that he is at hand; that he stands by us; that everything deposited is safe; safe not because we are worthy, but because he is faithful.

‘He by himself hath sworn,
I on his oath depend;
I shall, on eagles’ wings upborne,
To heaven ascend:
I shall behold his face,
I shall his power adore,
And sing the wonders of his grace
For evermore.’

We memorialise this evening not the worthiness of man, but the grace and fidelity of God; in keeping and taking to himself, for ever-accumulating enrichment, the deposit of a life; not the life of an apostle or a minister, but the career of a simple believer in Jesus, who knew whom he believed and entrusted to Him all that he possessed: and the dying testimony of the servant to the faithfulness of his Lord will leave us in no doubt as to the spirit in which the investment was made, and the manner in which the deposit was kept.

My acquaintance with Sir Francis Lycett, though begun five-and-thirty years ago, before my appointment to Madras, was not renewed till my return in 1864. It assumed the relationship of pastor, and the familiarity of intimacy, on my appointment, ten years later, to the Highbury Circuit. According to my view of the character of the deceased, it was conspicuous for steadiness, strength, and activity. His was a strong life, in all its features strong. He was never a man of schemes. In early life he seemed to have grasped the great idea of the progressive advancement and ultimate triumph of the Christian religion. His strong preference for Methodism was grounded upon a belief that its institutions and administrative economy were adapted to this end and purpose. To these, therefore, he studiously applied his abilities and opportunities. As a citizen of this great city, he was not merely a patriot and a philanthropist. He took a broader view of its moral necessities and his own duty in relation to them. He surveyed London with the eye of a steward of God; and, that he might be a wise as well as a faithful steward, he made the social diseases of the metropolis the subject of a careful consideration, in view of a more extensive application of what he believed to be the only effectual remedy. Very few men have studied the moral exigences of this city as closely as Sir Francis did. Using the facilities afforded him as a magistrate, a citizen, and a merchant, hardly one of its many phases escaped his notice. The result of this wide and exhaustive survey was a resolution to initiate the grand undertaking of his life. In this his munificence, though great, was equalled by his farsightedness. But who can calculate the beneficial fruits? It is easy to count the number of

the chapels built and the amount of the new sittings provided. But none can reckon up the spiritual good already achieved or yet in store. This, in all probability, is beyond the power of the imagination to conceive. In furtherance of a sublime purpose his sacrifices of time, strength, and labour were as remarkable as was his liberality in pecuniary means. It was my happiness to witness his zeal and devotion within a few days of the illness that closed his career; and it is no exaggeration to say that, though he was a man well stricken in years, the youngest members of the committees on which he sat were not so active as he.

Nor were his aspirations for usefulness limited to London, large as that sphere is. He was altogether a Connexional layman; and nothing less would satisfy his longings than the universal extension of the evangelizing system to which he was on principle attached. He had watched the village life of England as diligently as that of its metropolis, and avowed his persuasion that there Methodism would yet find one of its most fruitful fields. He was a Methodist by a decided and very sharp preference, but he loved all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and warmly espoused the Bible Society, the Foreign Missionary Societies, and every other institution that laboured for the instruction, the freedom, or the morality of the human race. At the same time, in whatever society he moved (and the multifarious associations in which it was his providential lot to mingle subjected him at times to the severest tests) he suffered nothing to deter or divert him from a zealous and consistent course. In every company and under every circumstance he modestly yet courageously avowed his attachment to Jesus and to the paramount claims of His kingdom on the earth. While, however, his moral sympathies knew no limit of

time, person, or place, he shone with the purest lustre in his own home. His domestic life was perfect in its way. His family relations were to him a spring of perpetual joy.

At length that home was filled with anxiety, and in no long time with grief. But in the last great trial of a man's life his faith did not fail him. His hope then fed itself on hymns and prayers. His clear and sound intellect was never clouded for a moment. Though the agonies of his disease were unspeakable, his patience was not once betrayed into irritation. He had but two special desires in his last hours—one was for a clearer manifestation of the Lord's favour, the other asked that the faithful wife from whom he was about to be separated for a season might be able to take comfort in sources which had solaced his own spirit.

His full assurance of hope to the end was shown by the Scripture or holy song to which he gave either utterance or assent, and by short ejaculations of praise to God. None can listen to these touching details without feeling how frequently the same words, whether of chapters or of hymns, come to the minds and hearts of dying saints. While John Newton's hymn, ‘How sweet the name of Jesus sounds!’ gave Sir Francis comfort on the day of his death, he bequeathed it to Lady Lycett as a last legacy for her consolation in her approaching hour of need. ‘*For ever with the Lord,*’ the glorious refrain of James Montgomery's hymn, were the words which described to the eyes of his faith the prospect immediately before him. Who can count the instances in which believers in the supreme moment have found comfort from Toplady's ‘*Rock of ages, cleft for me*’?

‘Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling,’

were among Sir Francis Lycett's latest words. But the last clear sentence that he uttered was John Wesley's—

•
'I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.'

So closely allied are entire self-distrust and sole confidence in the atonement! Sometimes funeral orations, so called, are pronounced at the grave by men who have no faith in the resurrection. But all their talk is of the past. They are dumb as to the future. Their eloquence and philosophy end at that margin; and at that margin our revelation begins!

III.

GOD OUR SAVIOUR.

A SERMON PREACHED IN THE CENTENARY HALL ON THURSDAY MORNING, APRIL 28TH, 1881, ON BEHALF OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

‘For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.’—1 TIMOTHY ii. 3—6.

WHATEVER may be advanced in favour of this Scripture or against it, it must be acknowledged on all sides that the statement it affirms is clear and complete. It is laid down in the form of a series of propositions. The diction is simply used as in the case of an axiom to express in the fewest words a truth which is supposed to carry its evidence upon the surface. This at any rate was the opinion of the writer, whose sincerity it would be uncritical to suspect. There is another assertion which will have the concurrence of all parties : that the matter contained in these propositions ranks first among the subjects of human inquiry. The interest attaching to the questions which relate to the Scripture before us has not only survived through all the centuries of Christian history, but lives in the

present day with the freshness of yesterday's novelty. I will not stay now to inquire into the reason of the undying curiosity which haunts the fundamental dogmas of religion, but pass on to make a third statement which will command very general, if not universal assent; that if the existence of the supreme Being and our own immortality occupy the first rank among human questions it is not likely that the world has made no progress in the elucidation and settlement of these subjects since the days of St. Paul. It is scarcely possible to imagine that the researches of successive generations for nearly twenty centuries, animated by the most commanding motives, have accomplished nothing towards unravelling the problems of religious belief. Have the studies of all these ages past resulted in confirming the propositions of St. Paul, or in over-throwing them?

1. He affirms in substance that all men are lost.
2. That they can only be saved by knowing the truth.
3. He here delivers the truth which saves men.

1. The doctrine of the innate corruption of human nature is not so much taught in the Holy Scriptures as accepted as the basis of the Christian religion. If we are not fallen beyond our own remedies we want no Saviour from heaven. (If it can be shown that there lies in human capability, whether in the single mind or in a concert of minds, the power of setting ourselves right, of attaining that condition of right living which will give stimulus and scope to our highest faculties, and secure the happiest organisation for our social and national life, the miraculous revelation of Jesus is without defence, and the supernatural claims of the New Testament rest upon no other foundation than that which supports the visions of the Kurân. We are not

now comparing or contrasting Christ and Muhammad. But Christ announced and assumed through all his ministry that the design of his mission was to save the human race from perishing : not to take part in helping mankind to recover itself, to be one among other guides and saviours ; but that its redemption must begin and end in him only, that separated from him men necessarily perish. As he declared to one of the Jewish authorities, ‘ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life ; ’ * which means, as Peter afterwards explained to other Jewish authorities, ‘ There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. ’ † This is the Name that arrests the degeneracy of the human race. I will make no distinction now between perishing in this life and in that which is to come. If you can point out a nation or a society of men, where Christ is unknown as a restraining power or a reconstructing power, which is not perishing, which is not growing worse instead of better, that nation is not lost, and its condition unanswerably refutes the cardinal teaching of the New Testament. There is no such people now existing in the world ; and if it be replied that the present diffusion of Christianity makes it difficult to arrive at a decision on the subject either one way or the other, we can soon shake off this embarrassment, and transfer our examination to another era. It will be in every way convenient to make that era the time when our text was written.

Paul lived in an age when literature had accomplished every result within its special province. I am not disposed to narrow that province ; to limit it

* John iii. 16.

† Acts iv. 12.

to mere intellectual culture. In its higher departments literature must do a certain amount of ethical work. The mind that expresses itself perfectly will not only think with accuracy, but when the subject of its thoughts corresponds therewith will come under the influence of the noblest impulses. When the thoughts that accuse and excuse one another contend in the breast of a literary man, if he be a philosopher, a poet, or a jurist, the law which is written in the natural heart, and the conscience which enforces it, will sometimes find expression in precepts, in aspirations, in prayers, which in the absence of the revealed law have a certain ethical value. Examples of moral teaching from this source abound in the literature that flourished in the pre-Christian time. This literature during a long period had been educating the human mind and the human character both in family and in national life; and Paul saw its complete results in Athens, in Ephesus, and in Rome. Literature had exhausted its power in the populations of these cities. It had not diffused its culture over the masses, but it had been long enough at work to regenerate their moral life, had it been able to do this. But what was the state of society with learning shining upon it in zenith splendour? It was filled, so Paul assures us, 'with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.'* I need not stay one moment to defend the testimony of the apostolic writer, for the periods which he accuses are

* Rom. i. 29—31.

amply historic; Paul's account is only one of many, and all the witnesses agree. He declared that in spite of the written and spoken wisdom of men the classic nations were perishing: and they have perished; their institutions and beliefs have perished. Their learning is still with us, an indestructible monument of genius and skill; and not, like the pyramids, a wonder for the traveller and a relic for the antiquary; it is a living force in modern education, having no more salt of moral power than of old, but furnishing inimitable models of method, of expression, and of literary work.

And here let me say that those who hope for the perfection of mankind through scientific teaching may consider with advantage whether science will succeed where literature has failed. Suppose science, triumphing over the most inscrutable of all problems, could give us an exact account of the *mind* in man; would the moral force of that knowledge be as great as that of a biography, in which we see mind in the scenes of our common life, encouraging us by its successes or warning us by its failures? If your scientific theories were replaced by scientific facts; if you had a library of books containing a correct exposition of nature in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth; if all propositions were verified so that speculation had scarcely a place in learning, would these works do more for the moral advancement of the modern world than the classical writers accomplished for the morals of the ancient world? Nay, they would not do as much. I am supposing the reign of scientific knowledge to exclude what many of its disciples consider it must exclude, *religious belief*. There was no certain faith in the old pagan authors, but there were longings for it; there was a noble spirit of inquiry penetrating the unseen and waiting at the

door of the Eternal; there was an impression that human duty must take its sanctions from superhuman authority; and there was attached to the notion of law not only a divine will to enforce its observance, but a divine wrath to resent its trespass. These impressions, having a closer affinity with the conscience than mere knowledge can have, and providing motives for right conduct far more effectual than demonstrations of natural phenomena, educated the moral nature of mankind, and bred virtues of character beyond the power of science, because outside its province. You have no more ground for supposing that an accurate acquaintance with the structure of the human mind will produce upright behaviour, than for imagining that the study of physiology must necessarily insure obedience to the laws of health. No, if literature which kindles our imagination and exalts it by conceptions of perfect goodness and perfect beauty, and which has preserved for us the history of those men who have striven to realise these conceptions, cannot save us from perishing, science will fail to do it. And if knowledge, imagination, conscience, and the accumulating history of human experience presented to us in every conceivable form of teaching, cannot turn back the degeneracy of mankind, it is because there is an ineradicable distemper in the heart of human nature.

There is no other explanation of the futility of mere teaching in the case of some of us whose infancy and childhood were vigilantly fenced; who, after there was nothing left for us to learn, or for others to do on our behalf, deliberately walked into the broad way with our eyes open, and our ears filled with the warnings and importunities of affection, knowing with grim distinctness that the end of our course would be ruin and hell. We were saved, not by learning our lessons over again;

not by advancing from speculation to exactness, from theory to fact. We were seized by a power unknown in the *curriculum* of schools, and in the circle of the sciences; a power which turned the wild current of our passions and subdued our will to the temper of childhood in a moment. A new life was given unto us and the dead lessons of morality became living powers; to the faculty of knowing the right there was added the power to do the right, and virtue became the path of choice and of happiness. Nothing is more easy than to call in question the reality of this power; nothing is more difficult than to explain on human grounds its permanent effects. We think we have proved that the proposition must stand, 'All men are lost.'

2. Paul affirms in the second place that they can only be saved by knowing the truth. 'God our Saviour, who will have all men to come unto a knowledge of the truth.' It may be necessary to state that the word here translated *knowledge* means, not a fragmentary acquaintance, a loose impression or notion of a subject, but complete knowledge; in the sense of knowledge going on to completeness; knowledge becoming more and more exact as we are approaching the object of knowledge. God wills that all men should know the truth with all possible exactness and thoroughness. Knowledge of this kind, whatever that may be which is known, must be personal. This is a glorious tribute to the mind of the human race. The scientific student speaks with hesitation and reasons falteringly when he speculates on the varieties of man. When the traveller pushes his way into lands hitherto unmapped and unknown, and brings to light, as did Livingstone and Stanley, types of men wilder than the jungle brute or bird, and apparently less accessible to reason and to kindness; with nothing but a

hideous human shape to suggest humanity, 'fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,' the scientist labours to bring these strange tribes into his system of sociology. We have no such difficulty; they are all men, but men perishing, 'destroyed for lack of knowledge.'* We are debtors both to the Greeks and to the barbarians. The holy Scriptures devote much attention to the origin, the development, and the fate of races. But when the corruption of our nature is described and its remedy is exhibited, all limits of nationality, all gradations of culture, disappear. Here is the account. 'They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable, *their life without purpose*; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.'† And God our Saviour will have every one to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. I repeat, this is a grand tribute to the mind of the human family. It is implied that all men are capable of knowing the truth, and knowing it thoroughly; that is, so knowing it as to be consciously possessed of its revelations and subject to its directing and changing power. To know the truth in this manner is to have all the intellectual and moral faculties engaged; all the affections and sympathies guided and inspired by the truth; all the relations of family and citizen life based upon the truth; all the laws and rights of national union fenced round by the truth. You see by this that the structural results of the truth are contemplated in this kind of knowledge as well as its personal and individual effects.

It has been alleged against Religion that she does not, in the proper sense of the word, *teach*; that her instruments are impressions rather than facts; and her domain the passions rather than the understanding;

* Hos. iv. 6.

† Ps. xiv.; Rom. iii. 12.

and that this is the reason why her success is conspicuous among the illiterate. As for the latter point of this sneer, the illiterate were unthought of, were left to perish body and soul, until she became their champion. Whether Religion teaches or not is not so reasonable a question as whether she is not our only teacher. She certainly was the first; and if, in computing the intellectual work done on behalf of mankind, you leave out of the account direct religious agency and indirect religious help, your reckoning will be an extremely easy process. At any rate, it will be acknowledged, if our text be closely considered, that in prosecuting the will of God our Saviour, we save men by bringing them unto the knowledge of the truth. Is not this the purpose and the method of all philosophers who are philanthropists, to raise the masses by teaching them the truth? From the Bible they have adopted the purpose and borrowed the method. They have issued popular expositions of science to simplify the intricacies of scientific reasoning, and to give a homely dress to scientific nomenclature, that the common people may not look with a brute gaze upon nature, but have an intelligent eye for her wonders, and turn to their own advantage laws which they now overlook, and taste a new and elevating pleasure. Social questions of uncommon importance are also brought from the studies of experts to the lecture halls of the people. So far we agree with these philanthropic workers; but now we must part company with some of them in considering what that truth is which saves men.

3. 'There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' This declaration does not occur in the text as explanatory of what is meant by *the truth* in the preceding verse.

It is set down as the reason and support of an exhortation to pray for all men. Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks must be made for all men, because there is one God and Father of all, and one Mediator who gave himself a ransom for all. But in selecting these propositions as comprising '*the truth*' which saves men, we take no liberty with the passage. The expression, which is of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, always means what is here affirmed, and never means anything else. The revelation of one God and one Redeemer is the truth which saves men from perishing; to know this truth is life for a man, for a people. Paul appropriates one of the grand formulas of his Master's prayer, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'* This is the truth unto the knowledge of which God wills that we should bring the nations. It is the final and supreme command of the Son of God to the Church, and sums up the issue of his life, his death, and his resurrection. 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'† The lack of this teaching and the knowledge imparted by it is death. In the first part of this discourse we approached the proposition from another side. We proved that the human race is perishing; that literature has been powerless to arrest its degeneracy; that science will in all likelihood prove to be even more helpless as a regenerating force. If there be an eternal Mind, the Original and Father of our minds, is it not evident that separated from him—that is, ignorant of him—we cannot live in perfect life? Our

* John xvii. 3.

† Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

life without God is not only partial, incomplete, but developed in monstrous inequality. In the savage it amounts to a shocking disguise; in the civilised it is a disastrous failure. Look at human life in the nations of Europe. Europe is not without God: its societies are largely animated by religious sentiment; many of its institutions originated in religious belief: but look at that seething mass of humanity, analyse the forces which are there contending for mastery, and tell me whether those that inspire hope in the breast of every honest lover of his kind are not of Christian origin; whether those powers that must in the end see the destruction of everything else are not peace as against war, and freedom as against oppression, and pure living as against licentiousness, and honesty as against fraud, and intelligent security as against suspicion and disquietude, and order as against anarchy? And are not these the living and surviving elements, as against those unnatural conditions that cannot in the nature of things go into the permanent issue? The imperishable and life-giving principles which make religion the saving power of the nations are these: the Fatherhood of God and the mediatorial brotherhood of Christ.

The only *one God* is the ultimate conception of human thought. The progress of examination and education in religion is not from one God to many, but from many gods to one. In nations whose religion is idolatry, the many-god belief is the superstition of the masses, the unthinking, whose deities are not the discoveries of thought, but the incarnations of passion. But the learned of these nations follow the traditions and literature of a monotheistic or pantheistic faith. The schools into which they are divided are not any of them polytheistic. Human thought in the absence of

direct revelation, when it feels after its Creator and is sedate, earnest, and devout, passes by the senseless imageries of fanatic credulity and pauses at the one universal Force: and it pauses because it is unable to learn by 'searching' in what manner that Force exists; and upon this ultimate boundary which divides reason from revelation it builds its one altar, *to the unknown God*. If this is a true account of the history of human thought when it is trying to find out God; if, where the Christian faith and the Christian Bible are unknown, the advancement of research into the power which made and sustains all things is everywhere in the direction of one Being and not many; and if this divine unity, to which all the best religious thought presses, is taught or suggested by the earliest traditions of the respective nations in which such investigations are carried on: it is clear, first, that the human race is recovering a lost knowledge; and, secondly, that the Bible alone is in a position to proclaim to the uncertain and bewildered religionists of the world, 'Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.' *

The second life-giving principle is the mediatorial brotherhood of Christ; a Man who gave himself a ransom for all. A *Man*, but essentially distinct from all other men, distinct in nature; otherwise he could not have accomplished a ransom for all, unless a ransom could be given by one who himself needed redemption; and in that case there is no reason why the power to ransom should not be distributed, and the world should have many redeemers. We say a Man distinct in nature from all other men, and therefore in all that distinguishes him *more than*

* Acts xvii. 23.

man. And what that is which is more than man is clearly displayed by the works and the words of Jesus. If this higher nature, so conspicuously apparent, joined by unknown assimilation to the human, and yet not human, be anything else than God manifested in our flesh, the position and superhuman attributes of Christ destroy to all intents and purposes as an object of human faith the unity of God. With such a Mediator in our midst we cannot preach with any chance of being understood that 'the Lord our God is one Lord.' To the mass of ordinary worshippers there will be two Lords. The people we are commissioned to save from perishing are not metaphysicians. They will not perplex their sense by attempting to distinguish between the superhuman and the divine. The Christ who is not God will be their God and Father; the Supreme Being will recede into a speculation for thinkers in religion, and Christianity will be a higher style of idolatry. If you touch the God-nature and the God-personality of the Mediator, you do not bring men nearer to God, you place God farther from men. It is impossible to offer pure worship and to effect the communion of rational prayer and undivided trust, if you have a superhuman mediator who is not God. Herein is the difficulty of those Unitarians who deny the deity of Christ, and yet ascribe to the Redeemer divine endowments. They are metaphysical theists and practical idolaters; and this is the secret of their universal failure as preachers, missionaries, and founders of Churches. Their doctrine is ineffective with the masses because it is simply intellectual, and their worship is cold because it is distracted by virtual distribution. 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve,' is a commandment it is impossible to obey if Jesus Christ be not God. As for

the difficulties that beset certain passages in which, as in our text, and in the 3rd verse of the 17th of John's Gospel, the one God is placed in apposition to the one Mediator, they belong to the mystery of godliness, and no explanation can resolve them: but the supposition of an uncreated God and a created mediator has no defence in reason, has no place in practical faith, has no authority in Scripture.

The apostles preach the deity of the Redeemer by direct declaration: there is no appearance of care on their part, as if they were nervously anxious to make their statements conform to the exigences of an hypothesis. He who teaches us to pray for all men because there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, exhorts us also to 'let this mind be in us which was also in Christ, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,'* and 'to look for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity.'† This is the doctrine that gives life to the world: the mediatorial brotherhood of Christ presenting by virtue of his perfect humanity a complete atonement to God, and presenting by virtue of his equal deity a complete forgiveness to man: attracting us to himself on his manhood side by the warm sympathies of a common nature; leading us and lifting us up by a human hand which belongs to an omnipotent arm. The worshipper is thus enabled to render an unperplexed adoration to his Maker, to place an immediate and ultimate trust in the oblation of his Saviour, and to love the Lord his God with all his heart, and mind, and

* Phil. ii. 5, 6.

† Tit. ii. 13.

soul, and strength. This is the glory of the Gospel that we are not led to God by propositions; his being is not assured to us by the demonstrations of reasoning; his ways are not reconciled to us by the balancings of human judgment: such a process of knowing him would restrict divine knowledge to the schools. He is approached by sympathy, he is understood by trust, he is appropriated by love. These are the feelings which bring babes to the footstool of our heavenly Father; these are the cords of the Man who is lifted up to draw all men unto him; these are the meshes of the net by which you catch men, and may take into the ample inclosure of the Church all men.

If God our Saviour wills that all men should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth, you ought to will it; which means not to assent to it, and to approve of it, but to resolve that you will do your part towards effecting it. This is to will it as God wills it. He testified the ransom in the beginning by the first Tabernacle of witness, the shadow of things to come; and then in due time by accomplishing the advent of his Son, by the demonstration of his resurrection from the dead, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost, to effect the purpose of that ransom wherever it should be proclaimed. There are different seasons of testimony, corresponding with the advancing revelations and the occurring vicissitudes of the work. St. Paul recognised his season: Whereunto, 'that is, to the testifying,' I was appointed a proclaimer and an apostle! * Luther recognised his season of testifying, and the Reformation liberated the doctrine of justification by faith. This is the time of your call to testify, not as apostles or reformers, but as heralds. God made

* 2 Tim. i. 11.

you a Church at a time when a missionary testimony was demanded. His unity was unknown among the heathen, his Christ was denied, and his ransom was comparatively fruitless in nations called after his name. The spirit of his own people was steeped in lethargy; the watchmen whom he had set upon the walls of Jerusalem had deserted their posts; the Lord's remembrancers were silent; the life-giving truth which had been entrusted to the Church for diffusion among the perishing nations was locked up: hidden in unrighteousness, hidden in the heresies of creeds, hidden in the orders and in the ritual of ecclesiastical systems. It was at this time that God raised up Methodism to be a new tabernacle of witness, to set free the testimony of a universal ransom, to set at nought Church forms which had become walls to inclose the truth, instead of paths to convey it away, and make it the possession of every creature under heaven; and your fathers preached a free salvation; and because it was free and universal they were bound, logically by their doctrine and by their designation, and irresistibly by the impelling force of their Redeemer's love, to make the knowledge of his ransom commensurate with the range of its purchase: and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following; signs that are with us to-day, though the fathers have departed. Behold these signs in the vast Methodist Churches of America, with their conferences, their missionary societies, and their hosts of missionary witnesses! Behold these signs in the double liberty which our fathers carried to the captive islands of the west, loosing the negro populations and letting them go, first into the freedom wherewith Christ makes his people free, then into the citizen emancipation which is every Christian freeman's right! Behold these signs

in the growing nations of the far south, whose fathers were literally savage beasts of prey, roaming the jungle and devouring one another, but to whom Mr. Hunt and Mr. Calvert carried the life-giving and the nation-constructing testimony that there is one God the Father of all, and one Mediator the brother of all; and these wild children of Adam listened, came out of their dens, left their wolfish spirits and leopard spots behind them, and became like the holy Child Jesus that led them forth; and not only do they not hurt nor destroy in the Lord's holy mountain, but they themselves have become testifiers of the ransom to the fierce tribes of other islands. And the time is coming—and almost within sight—when throughout the archipelagoes of the southern world there shall not be left one example of cannibal lust! No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall walk thereon, but the redeemed shall walk there. Behold these signs to-day—more or less evident, but all growing into splendid distinctness—in India, which is becoming one vast empire of religious inquiry, in the aggressive Churches of Southern Africa, and in the lifting up of the gates and hoary prejudices of China that the King of glory may go in, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Yes, brethren, he is confirming the Word everywhere with signs following signs; and I call upon you to consider that this is your time to carry forth, or to send forth, to perishing millions the testimony that saves, and to support by personal sacrifice and personal intercessions the heralds who are your voice in the wilderness of heathenism, and who are preparing the paths of the Lord and of his Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth!

In my timid distrust and unworthy leaning upon human instruments, I could wish this moment for

‘ — the sight of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still.’

But I stand as it were upon the edge of a recent grave, into which so much of our wealth has been entombed, where the lips that would have given their wonted tribute to this anniversary are even more eloquent for Missions in their sealed stillness than they could have been if our brother had not died. Yes, *he being dead yet speaketh*.* He who never spoke of himself has left his life to speak for him. The missionary conflict was the burden of his care, the missionary triumph was the prophecy of his eloquence. Let us take up this burden, and cherish and transmit the hope of this triumph!

* The late Rev. Dr. Punshon.

IV

THE PURE IN HEART

THE OFFICIAL SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE IRISH CONFERENCE JUNE 17TH, 1881, AND PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE CONFERENCE.

'Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.'—MATT. v. 8.

WHAT is Purity of Heart? The word *pure* literally signifies clean, washed, spotless. *Clean* of heart is the expression upon which we must fix our attention. We find it in David's prayer, *Create in me a clean heart*; and in his description of the man who will have a right to ascend the hill of the Lord, *He that hath clean hands and a pure heart*. It means more than honesty and truthfulness; more than the subjection of evil desire; more than the most correct personal habits; more than the most perfect mastery and government either of self or the expression of self. It is the removal from the soul of every moral state which is unlike God, or contrary to God. There is no evil in the mind of God, nothing that is not perfectly proper to the idea of the First Cause of all things: there ought to be no evil in the mind of man; that is, nothing opposed to the proper idea of what a man ought to be.

A man ought to be what his Creator made him to

be : *a creature in the image of God*, that is, a son, a child of God. Whatever is opposed to a state filial to God does not belong to the idea of a man ; whatever is not essential to man's sonship is not essential to *man* ; and if it disturb that filiation, it is in so far an evil. A proper idea of what is becoming in a child of God is the only standard by which a man can be justly measured. I need not tell you that this standard is unknown amongst men ; a fact which in itself proclaims their alienation and degeneracy. The world's idea of a man is a shifting impression, corresponding with the mental state of different countries. Excellence in physical strength and courage, in cunning, in cruelty, in war, in learning, and in wisdom, these are the attainments to which the epithet manly is applied amongst the various nations and tribes of the earth. God has graciously restored to us the lost measure of a man, which is an obedient and loving child of the heavenly Father. Look at the mind of such a child : it contains nothing which God does not love ; it does nothing which would lead it away from God ; it desires and muses and resolves and feels in communion with God. It must be in a greater or less degree ignorant, for it is the growing mind of a child ; and for the same reason it is liable to err, and will need instruction, support, and training : but it will not rebel either against the expressed will of its father which is law, or against that instinctive knowledge of what is becoming and secretly agreeable to a father from a son, which nature herself teaches. Look, I say, at the mind of such a son. There is no *pollution*. What is pollution in a son ? A taint upon the son's heart which, as a bright mirror, ought to reflect the father's image ; the loss of self-government, permitting the ascendancy of the inferior nature over the superior, the senses which

connect us with the earth to master the mind which links us with God. Earth never of itself defiles, for it was made and fashioned by the Creator; but the moment it escapes command it becomes filthiness to the flesh and spirit. Pollution in the sight of God is earth out of its place, and He who made man his son to have power over it, which power is a feature of his own image, seeing that power surrendered, beholds a fallen and defiled offspring. Earth was once Eden, and man's feet walked on it, and man's hands touched it without taint. Man was holy, and the surrounding creation was sacred, because everything was in its place, as God left it. But when the Creator's son and priest and heir placed himself under another sway than that of his Father, and obeyed where he should have ruled, everything lost harmony, purity, and strength; and paradise shrivelled up to a desert. Nothing remained holy when man ceased to be pure—ceased, that is, to walk with heaven above him and within him, and earth under his feet; instead of having earth above him and within him, and heaven under his feet.

What is pollution in a son? The supremacy of tastes dishonouring to his father's rank, making a heavenly mind of the earth, earthy; and mark how such an uncleanness will spread. It banishes frankness of intercourse; confidence dies, and with it truth; the son fears and lies like a slave, the father punishes like an angry lord; the son hides himself from the father, the father hides himself from the son; and the evils of alienation grow so rapidly that the souls which were one become two opposite natures. With love, frankness, confidence, and sympathy gone, and the contrary vices mastering his nature, man the son will become as incapable of knowing God the Father as he is unwilling to meet him. In the fellowship of the

human mind with God, the loss of sympathy is always accompanied by a loss of power, and an ever-increasing loss of power. The mind becomes assimilated to the element in which it thinks. If God be not within it, the faculty that perceives God will be impaired; as the eye, if kept in continual darkness, ultimately loses the power of reflecting light. Man, who was made to see God and to be with him, has lost both the sight and the knowledge of his Father. He is in an unnatural state. In the absence of heavenly light he has bent his eye from generation to generation earthward, and his children have become spiritually blind. When they ceased to glorify God as God, their foolish hearts were darkened; when they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a mind void of judgment, and then followed that catalogue of unspeakable results that go down in steps of degeneracy to the chambers of death, and to the remoter passages of hell.*

What is purity of heart? It is that state of mind in which a man becomes a man once more, a loving and obedient son of the heavenly Father; it is a recovery of the proper form of a man, which is an image of the heavenly.

This deliverance from the degenerate race of the man who fell is accomplished by the mediation of the Man who did not fall, Christ Jesus. And as we have borne the image of the earth, superinduced by rebellion and pollution, so through the reconciling love and regenerating spirit of the second Adam, we may regain the image of the heavenly.† In Christ our nature ascends to where it was before—nay, to an elevation that overshadows the felicities of Eden.

* Rom. i. 21, &c.

† 1 Cor. xv. 49.

First, the rebellion which drove us from God is pardoned in Christ, and the soul that grew not merely dark but blind from the absence of the Father's face draws near and ventures tremblingly to utter the old cry, *Abba!* From long disuse it is at first a stammer and but imperfectly comprehended; but the lips, instructed by the new heart, shape it distinctly at last, and *Father, Abba, Father!* is again the natural cry from man to God. The earthly, the sensual, and the devilish as necessarily depart from the mind in the reconciled presence of God as night shadows haste from the advance of morning. I do not say they flee as instantly but as necessarily, for God is reconciled to us through Christ, because Christ's sacrificial blood is able to cleanse from all sin. God would not accept it for us were it not able to do this. It is appointed to do this. In sacrificial language, which at our altar, the cross, is not figurative but literal, it makes clean before God the mind that accepts its atonement. When we stand before that cross and trust in the sufficiency of the Offering presented thereupon, our guilt at once leaves us, and our hearts begin to grow white, to lose their spots of defilement, pride, untruthfulness, dissimulation, and every worldly lust and ungodly habit. We are in the light as God is in the light, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*

In one word, we are pure in heart: the holy children of a holy Father; and the pollution that brought darkness into the soul and induced blindness having been purged away, followed by the purifying knowledge that God through Christ is our Father, and by the quickening consciousness of the Father's love, the eyes of our understanding recover strength to

* 1 John i. 7.

move, to receive heavenly light, and to reflect it; every power and affection of the soul returns to God, becomes assimilated to God, and we begin to *see God*, which is the inevitable result of this renewed and loving intercourse, for the child was made to see its Father. Our minds in bringing themselves to perceive God follow the intended bent of their faculties. The eyes of our understanding were fashioned to look at God. The laws of their perception are in exact harmony with the light of the object upon which they gaze. A man looking upon his Maker is in no new or forced position; he ought always to have been looking there. The vision of God which is the beatitude of the text is not so much the *reward* of purity of heart as its inevitable consequence. I cannot speak of other beings of whose relation to God I know nothing, but the mind of a man who is God's child must see God if it be pure. Angels may possibly be admitted to the inner glories of the divine Majesty as a reward for service. But man, made perfect in purity, passes by the ranks of his Father's servitors, and claims and naturally assumes the incommunicable heritage of a son. Where should he be but at the side of his Father? His eyes were made to meet those of his Father, and to rest their gaze upon a countenance of which his own is a copy. Human powers having a family affinity to the attributes of God, find their natural occupation in him; and the human heart gives and receives love, confidence, and joy, in the unspeakable communion of a child.

As a warrant for these statements let me adduce the position in heaven of our adorable Christ. He is the Son of God in the eternal generation of the Father, the second person in the ever-blessed Trinity, very God of very God. But he is also the Son of God as an offspring in the human family. He is 'equal to

the Father, as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood.' He is 'God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ; one not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God.'* Mark that expression, 'taking the manhood into God.' Manhood can be taken into God. Could it ever have been taken into God if man had not been created in God's image? Is it not the easy blending together of one nature? Our manhood is in God now in the person of Christ. His mind, whom we must claim as a brother, whose faculties are constructed after the pattern of our own, who when he was upon earth received impressions from earth as we derive them, whose human character was formed on earth, and by associations and influences similar in kind to those that shape our own, and who when he ascended to heaven took with him impressions, memories, and mental features earthborn—I say *his* mind is now in God; in God in a sense in which it can be said of no other being; in God by a unity of substance, making one Christ.

With these considerations read the text: '*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.*' Every man in his own order, Christ the first, afterwards they that are Christ's. Christ is Man in God, one Being. We are not identified with the divine essence: but the fact that there is such a union in the instance of the Man Christ Jesus will convince you how close a fellowship is possible. The Man Jesus sees God with self-intimacy; he is conscious of God as he is conscious of himself; and God the eternal Son is conscious of the Man as he is conscious of himself; and the thoughts, feelings, powers, communications, and receivings of both natures are perceptible to

* The Athanasian Creed.

the consciousness of one person. But as Christ is one with God, the pure in heart are one with Christ. '*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one;*' and again, '*That they may be one, even as we are one.*'* 'Words that remind us of the triune counsel to bring us into being. Let us make man an image of ourselves.' (*Mallet.*)

What a weight of glory is in reversion for the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ! They shall see God. Sight is a beautiful sense. It surpasses its fellows in rapidity of acquisition, facility of action, and breadth of command. Touch creeps, sight has an angel's wing, and sweeps the firmament. It seems to extend your presence with your gaze. You seem to be everywhere within the limits of your horizon, and in proportion to *know* what you see. And waiting upon the sight is the imagination, storing itself with the patterns of the seen, and then with these patterns transporting itself and you into the illimitable void of thought to make firmaments and people worlds of its own. By the nimbleness and ethereal command of sight on earth, supported and outstripped by the wonderful endowment of fancy, we may learn a little, perhaps, of the meaning of the expression, 'seeing God.' The nearest analogy upon which we can presume to conjecture the action of the divine mind is sight, as in that passage in the Chronicles, 'The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth.'† And again, 'The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.'‡ And again, 'Thou God seest me.'§ God knows us instantly, or, as we make it intelligible to ourselves, *He sees us*. In heaven

* John xvii. 22, 23. † 2 Chron. xvi. 9. ‡ Prov. xv. 3.
§ Gen. xvi. 13.

we shall see Him, know Him by intuition. On earth we are rather known of God than know him. We see him through a glass, an obscure and most imperfect mirror; in heaven we shall see him face towards face. Now we know in part; then we shall know even as also we are known.* After the same manner in which we are seen or known of God, we shall see or know God.

We may be, like the living creatures of the Apocalypse, 'full of eyes round about and within,'† and have the expanse of the Deity above, beneath, around us. Not the Creator's works, but the Creator! The love of God to us sinners may be seen in its conception, and the revelation of every event in its history: the fair idea springing from the first Mind, and working itself out in the unspeakable gift of Christ, in all the gifts that streamed upon us with Christ, in the countless ministers of these gifts, and in the degrees of illumination and blessing by which they advanced one upon the other; prophecy succeeding type and history accomplishing prophecy, and all converging with accumulations of glory upon Christ! Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see*. Every mystery will open itself at their approach, and ten thousand voices of loving invitation will cry to the gazers, 'losing themselves in the beatific vision,' *Come and see!* And Christ himself shall lead them, the God of heaven and the brother of man.

I shall conclude this discourse with two reflections.

First. Next to the faculty of seeing God is the faculty of interpreting God. We have said that purity of heart is the condition of intuitively knowing Him in heaven. We must now affirm that, all other things being equal, none but a holy mind can hope to interpret

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

† Rev. iv. 8.

God correctly on earth. It is the pure mind rather than the learned that finds out the meaning of the Scriptures. Sin is a disease of the vision, which Hebrew and Greek cannot purge from the student's eyes; and any impression of the spiritual revelations of the Bible coming from the mere scholar is no more to be believed than descriptions of scenery from an observer of very defective sight. Both may tell you what is true, but they are indebted to other witnesses; and the personal conclusions of him who borrows other people's eyes are always to be suspected. The most finished scholars have been engaged in attempting to draw from the Gospels an accurate image of Christianity; they have been endeavouring to see Jesus Christ through historic glasses. They have visited the Holy Land, and made themselves familiar with the sacred haunts of New Testament story; they have studied the account of the crucifixion on Calvary itself, and pondered the evidence for the resurrection standing over the tomb of Christ. Languages and dialects, both ancient and modern, have made them masters of texts, readings, and early annotations, and the history of doctrines, and of Churches; and with these rare advantages, and the accomplished skill of veteran scholars, they have produced what they consider to be a fairly accurate account of Christ's person, doctrine, and institutions. Why is it they have miserably failed, themselves being the judges of each other? Why is it they have made blunders of which a Sabbath-school child might be ashamed? Why is it that a Christ from their hands is a monster of the fancy, being neither God, man, nor angel, and as intangible as a poet's fable? Their learning is not at fault, their diligence is unquestionable. But here is their failure; they imagine that Christ is to be dis-

covered, whereas he is simply revealed; he is made manifest to them, and to them only, who approach the mystery of his person in a prayerful, humble, reverent spirit; who do not try to force their entrance into divine knowledge, but ask to be admitted. The door is a living door, and opens and shuts of his own accord; the way is a living way, and is straight and luminous, or cloudy and tortuous, of his own accord. Blessed are they who knock at that door and inquire for that way to find purity of heart; those who seek to lose their pride and selfishness shall soon lose their doubts.

Secondly. There is a reflection which equally concerns us all, it is indeed the application of the text as it affects the unholy: they shall never *see* God. 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' As to the reward and punishment awaiting respectively the just and the wicked, we have no precise knowledge. Speculation has a wide field of conjecture, but the pulpit is not the place to expatiate over ground purely imaginative. It is enough for me to insist upon the positive doctrine, *no holiness, no sight of God*. Where the unholy man will be sent I know not, what his eternal privations may be, or what his actual woe, I will not pretend to declare: this I know, he will never see God. An immortality of atheism: not the atheism of unbelief, but the atheism of privation, a dreary eternity, in banishment 'from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.'* Never with the Lord: to be somewhere for ever where Christ is not, that is hell. In this world you may be contented without Christ, and yet you would be more unhappy than you are if there were a great gulf fixed between you and Christian privileges and Christian people. You who are unholy,

* 2 Thess. i. 9.

have no conception how much your life is indebted to holiness, to the Holy Ghost whom you grieve, to holy doctrines, holy saints, and holy witnesses, departed hence in the Lord—all these are yours through the riches of the divine forbearance that they may make you holy. But if you are not made holy, if you end your probation as you are, you can take nothing of Christian growth with you, and I cannot conceive of an unholy mind passing out of the body into a holy state.

V.

TARRYING FOR POWER.

A SERMON DELIVERED IN BRUNSWICK CHAPEL, AT THE LIVERPOOL
CONFERENCE, JULY 24TH, 1881.

'And, behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.'—LUKE xxiv. 49.

'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.'—ACTS ii. 1.

THE subject of my discourse is the *prayer-meeting* of the Church, including in this expression other assemblies of Christ's people, whether for fellowship in piety, for council in administration, or for the public declaration and execution of the judgments of the Church. We suppose that the Christian believer has entered into his closet for the renewal of exhausted strength; that then he has called together the members of his family, and offered upon his home-altar the morning and evening sacrifice. And now we see him put aside for awhile his private Christian rights and his family position, and take his part as a member of the larger and ever-increasing household of the Church. The Church thus composed is gathered together by the command of its Leader and Head to wait for a particular class of power that does not spring out of it,

but must descend upon it. There is already power in the faith, knowledge, and character of each member; there is great power, both communicative and self-adjusting, when the wisdom of many experiences is matured into the decision of one assembly. But there is another power which is neither in individual contributions of influence, nor in the carefully weighed judgments of the congregation. It is distinguished from all other endowments; it is power 'from on high' to invest with supernatural force the testimony of the Church that Jesus Christ is risen indeed. The converting and regenerating mission of the Church is to be accomplished by this testimony, and by this only. Men cannot be saved until they believe that the dead Christ revived and is now their ascended Lord; and they cannot know this miracle until another miracle demonstrates the truth to their understanding. That other miracle is a certain spiritual energy conveyed from heaven to clothe the witness of the Church. Let me illustrate this statement by reviewing the history of the events which led up to the divine Pentecost.

After Christ had formed his Church, and before his ministers had opened their commission, or his people had fallen into organised Church duties, he commanded them to assemble for prayer, and to continue in prayer until they received the promise of the Father. Observe that the Lord himself had done much for them both before and after the resurrection. He had made them clean through the word.* He had not only 'showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs,' but had gone out of his way to humour and overcome the obstinate scepticism of one who insisted upon alleging his own conditions of belief. He had com-

* John xv. 3.

municated to them a measure of the Holy Ghost, and had so far illumined their souls and strengthened their faith and courage, that they were ready at once for the onset of the approaching and terrible fight of faith: 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' As if they would add, We are prepared; we are longing to vindicate thy claims, to brave all forms of opposition, whether of argument or terror; to face death itself in the work of Christianising the world for thee! Mark well the reply that rebuked and informed the new zeal of these impatient witnesses: 'Ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and then ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.' They must *tarry*, first, for a few moments until that cloud which was now descending from heaven upon the spot where they stood should receive Him out of their sight; and then, having seen Him go up to heaven, they must return to Jerusalem and tarry further until, in unmeasured plenitude, the Holy Ghost should fall upon them. They were to tarry, not each one in his own house or lodging; they were to go to one place and continue in prayer and supplication, men and women. For the first time in their intercourse with the Master they received in lieu of his bodily presence the word of his mouth. They were compelled to address themselves, albeit with reluctance and misgiving, to the study of a principle of which they had never heard, or heard to no purpose, until after the resurrection: 'Because thou hast seen me, hast thou believed? Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'* This is the word upon which he had caused them to hope: 'Ye shall be

* John xx. 29.

baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.*

I love to dwell upon the place of their assembly. It was the chamber in which the last Passover was celebrated and the first Eucharist. It was the room in which Jesus appeared to them on the evening of the day of his resurrection, and where eight days after that event there occurred the memorable conversation with Thomas the sceptic. It was just forty-four days since they first entered that apartment and sat round the great Teacher, profoundly ignorant of the meaning of his death, and, necessarily, of the nature of his kingdom; for on that first occasion and in that room they revived a miserable dispute, of which they had just sense enough to be ashamed—*which of them should be accounted the greatest.*† Poor simple men, playing with a child image of future distinction, and tossing the golden toy from one to another in the conjectures and assumptions of fancy, while the Master sat by, with a pity so exquisitely fine and tender, that, although his spirit was oppressed even unto death by the appalling future of the next hour, he condescended for their sakes to be at leisure for a few moments from his own agony, to make their petty controversy the text of a noble discourse on precedence in service: ‘He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve. He that sitteth at meat is greater than he that serveth. . . . I am among you as he that serveth.’ That night he was arrested and led as a lamb to the slaughter, and the disciples were scattered as sheep having no shepherd. The next day (Friday), the fifteenth day of Nisan—the

* Acts i. 5.

† Luke xxii. 24—27.

darkest this world ever knew and the brightest—the divine Victim hung slain upon the cross until nightfall; and the hopes of the Church went with him into the grave, and remained with him during the frightful suspense of Saturday.

The disciples had fled their several ways at the time of the arrest; but the upper chamber had become a haunt for them, and whether by concert or by instinct they crept back to it, and spent Saturday, their last Jewish sabbath, and Sunday, their first Christian sabbath, the glorious resurrection day, until the evening of which, however, there was no rest for them. The tumult of conflicting passions, like the quickly alternate darkness and light of a storm, throbbed in the hearts of these men, as rumour after rumour reached them of an empty tomb, a vision of angels, a passing form of the Christ; and *at evening time there was light*. He knew the guest chamber; his spirit had been with them there; and at the crisis of their intolerable excitement, as in a former trial when they were nearly lost in a Gennesaret gale, his bodily presence was suddenly in their midst, and the tossed and wrecked spirits of the men were landed upon certainty and salvation.

There is something in our nature that makes us cling, if not in person, in memory, to certain spots of ground; a building, a room, the haunt of a particular tree, a river, a homestead, which some trial or joy has invested with unfading associations. Such places have power over us, and give power to us; and of all places which history has made conspicuous, that private room in Jerusalem, belonging to a friend of Christ whose name has not come down to us, is the most illustrious for memorable scenes. Even the glory of Sinai must pale before the splendours of this upper

chamber. The miracles of the wilderness were ordinary events as compared with the stupendous marvel and significance of Christ's resurrection. The first and second temples in their structure, in their enormous wealth, and, above all, in their traditions, stood alone in the world, not only in every interest which can attach to edifices, but in historic position, the great landmarks of the pre-Christian ages; and yet, in view of that unadorned and unnoticed chamber, we may apply to them a comparison of St. Paul's: 'They have no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth.' To this room the scattered Church returned after the ascension. I shall not attempt to analyse or define the constitution of that assembly. It may be well, however, to remark in passing (1) that every one of the eleven apostles was present; and that the twelfth in the place of Judas was elected before the descent of the power from on high; (2) that the number present and registered did not represent the numerical force of the Church, but only those who happened at the time to be in Jerusalem; these, however, consisting of the chief witnesses of the resurrection; (3) that certain women were in the company, those, doubtless, who had waited upon Jesus, of whom a brief list is given by St. Luke in his eighth chapter; and pre-eminently Mary, the ever-blessed mother of the Lord, and other relatives of his. In this brief and last notice of the illustrious Mary, there is a ruthless exposure of the hollowness of the Marian dogmas of the Roman Church. She was present in the Pentecost meeting as a worshipper, and not as an object of worship. If it be true that the titles, the honours, and the power ascribed to Mary are the appointments of God, it is impossible to imagine that in the early history of the Church of Christ, with the presence of the virgin

in the midst of his people, when the recent and dreadful blank of his withdrawal from sight would have made welcome the substitution of one so closely and altogether one with him as his mother, there should be no other allusion to her in the Acts of the Apostles, and no single reference to her in those expositions of faith, those disclosures of all the sources of comfort, and those complete treatises of Christian duty which constitute the remaining books of the New Testament.

And now, brethren, having described the incidents which conduct us to the Pentecost, and having noticed some characteristics of the assembly convened by the command of Christ in the upper chamber in Jerusalem, let us make an effort, and it will require, as it deserves, an effort, to study and make real to ourselves the picture of a Church on the eve of a great work, tarrying for power to accomplish it. When I say that it will require an effort to represent this event to ourselves, I do not mean that it will ask at our hands an elaborate description of the place, the time, the men, and the features of the meeting. It is not so much an effort of description as an effort of spiritual discernment which the reproducing of the Pentecost scene demands. I pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit may assist not mainly our imagination, but our insight and judgment, that we may grasp the condition of that primitive Church before the advent of the power. In view of the task it was called to undertake it was helpless. Let us recall that task: 'Ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth;' which means, as interpreted by the passage in St. Matthew: 'Ye shall make disciples of all the nations by testifying of me.' The power which that Church lacked was the energy of resistless testimony. It possessed the spirit

of prayer, and could witness unto God a faith in the divine Son; it possessed the spirit of fellowship in which the members could encourage and edify one another; it possessed the spirit of Church organisation, in which it found a warrant to seek divine aid in electing for a vacancy in the apostolate; nay, more than this, it was actually inspired by a zeal for work, and animated by an impatient desire to deliver its pent up Gospel to a lost world. It had every ordinary qualification necessary to complete the conditions of conclusive testimony: the apostles were eye-witnesses; they were agreed as to the facts of their witness; they represented such a variety of knowledge by reason of their separate temperaments and the diverse opportunities of their observation, that every possible objection would find its appropriate answer from one or another of the witnesses, and every conceivable argument, whether of scepticism or prejudice, would be refuted and silenced: what more did they want to make their testimony irresistible?

It is true that they would have to contend against the biblical erudition of the Pharisees and the scholarly acuteness of the Sadducees, and that these were great masters of the very Scriptures out of which the apostles would have to reason that Jesus was the Christ. But they were not tarrying for theological acquirements and dialectic skill. It was not proposed that they should be marched against scholars and literary men in the heavy armour of scholastic controversialists; they had not proved the weapons of colleges, and must go into the field without them. They were called to be the witnesses of Jesus; and to accomplish this mission their human preparations were complete: in any case the tarrying for a few days would not advance them. It is true also that they would

have to appear before rulers and to reason with statesmen; that they would have to brave the threatenings and resentments of public law when its enactments happened to stand in their way; that frequently they would be a mark for the assassination of conspirators, or the capricious ferocity of mobs; that they would require the tact, the address, the coolness, the ready resource, and the immovable fortitude which we are in the habit of associating with accomplished men of the world; and that these apostles were in no sense men of the world, but rude Galilean peasants and fishermen. But if qualities like these were essential to apostolic equipment, they must be acquired by experience rather than by tarrying in meditation and council. No; I affirm that every human preparation possible to that assembly was present, and yet it was *helpless*. I will go further, and maintain that if every apostle had been a Gamaliel in learning, if wise men after the flesh, and mighty, and noble had been called, if all the members of the Sanhedrim had been chosen witnesses of the resurrection, and had cast their learning, their wealth, their reputation, and their authority into the treasury of that first Church, it would not have changed one whit the helplessness of its position in relation to its work. To convince men that Jesus rose from the dead requires other arts of persuasion than logic, and credible evidence, and ecclesiastical authority: to induce men to put their passions under a yoke of holiness, to compel a Roman to glory in the Crucified, and a Jew to accept the sacrifice of Calvary, to turn upside down the current notions of power and wisdom and pleasure and progress, to change the aims, the manners, and the very springs of life—in one word, and it shall be the word of Jesus himself, *to open men's eyes* (who believed they could see), *and to turn them from darkness to light*,

*and from the power of Satan unto God,** no human preparation is equal to a work like this!

I do not mean for a moment that human preparation is left out of the account. The assembly of Pentecost was a human instrumentality of superb fitness for the work of testifying that Jesus is the Christ. He had himself chosen the chief men, had imparted to them the mysteries of his kingdom, and instructed them in the art of interpreting his own Scriptures; the eternal Father had revealed to their spirits the person of the eternal Son, and the man Christ Jesus had kindled in their hearts the enthusiasm of a personal love which was ready to face torture and death in defence of his claims. But the fact still remains. A witness may have knowledge, sympathy, honesty, a ready tongue, and an eager wish to deliver his testimony; and yet if he witness to a miracle he must receive power from the region of miracles, or he will not command practical belief.

Brethren, it is to this confession of helplessness, until we receive power from on high, that I desire to bring my own spirit and to see all my fellow labourers brought during the present Conference. I am convinced that this truth and the confession of it must be wrought into our souls by the Holy Spirit before we can hope for any wide descent of power. Our difficulty lies not in admitting its necessity, but in learning our uselessness as an aggressive Church without it. Our fathers mastered the lesson readily, because as yet they possessed not the emblems of Church power by which our faith is liable to be deceived or divided. Without chapels, without endowments, without wealth, without colleges, without great

* Acts xxvi. 18.

working departments, without fame, and being for the most part men untrained in the theology and eloquence of schools, they knew that they were abandoned to the miracle of the Holy Ghost; they had no surroundings to distract them from this master condition of success. I will presume to insist upon it that we are as absolutely abandoned to the miracle as they were; that the visible Methodism which we have built, and whose dimensions are so imposing, has not altered in the slightest degree our relation to the 'power from on high'; that all that we have gathered together, and all that we command, does not contribute one solitary influence to the power that converts a sinner from the error of his ways. To acknowledge this in theory is easy enough, it is a part of our creed; to feel it through the thick covering of an immense Church system, to realise the utter nakedness it announces, is impossible without the personal demonstration of that same Spirit whose energy is the one requirement of the day. If that demonstration be made to every worker in this assembly, to every minister and layman attending this Conference, there will follow such a cry of supplication, such a united violence of prayer, that the power will pour itself into us like air passing into a vacuum, and the rushing, mighty wind will fill our ministry, our colleges, our schools, our pastorate; and Methodism will again furnish the testifying power of the Church, and nothing that even this age can array against us shall be able to withstand a testimony whose wisdom and spirit are from on high!

May we not regard this Conference as a tarrying pause for the reception of power? We are between the concluding and the opening year. The Master has renewed his command and our commission: 'Ye

shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth;' in the cities and districts surrounding you and throughout the world. Dare we accept the commission and venture upon the work of the new year without a baptism of testifying force? We have piety among us, but so had the first believers before the power fell upon them. We have the wisdom of council and organisation to elect our officers and to perfect our departments; so had they. We have the spirit of holy fellowship, and can come together with a psalm, a doctrine, a revelation, and cheer and edify one another in love; so also the Church in the upper chamber when they were waiting for power. And without any extraordinary effusion of grace we may now prosecute the work of our sessions with sufficient ability and unbroken harmony, and we may return to our circuits and take our places in the vast Methodist Church, with its system repaired in this organ, retouched in that, adapted in a third, and warranted to work for another year; and during that year it may accomplish great things; relieve its properties and funds of debt, multiply its chapels, extend its school work, circulate its literature, and return an unimpaired numerical force. But we were called and made a Church, not to keep the breath of our own life from going out, but to bring breath into the dead that are mouldering on every side of us, to go into the open valley of the slain and prophesy upon them until the breath of God pass into them also, and prophesy again, perpetually recruiting the army of the living from the scattered and dishonoured bones of the dead. 'Ye shall be my witnesses,' not to one another; not within the inclosures of a Church where all are living in God; but unto the perishing without; to be the voice of

the Son of God unto the dead that they may pass out of death into life. This is the field of Methodist work ; if we are powerless here there is no reason for our existence anywhere. And apart from a miraculous gift of testimony we are powerless here ; powerless as a converting, a resurrection agency. We can enforce upon men the practice of new habits ; we can make the drunkard sober, and the wasteful thrifty ; we can remodel the houses and elevate into intelligence and self-reliance the life of the poor ; and all honour and success to the generosity and wisdom of those institutions which soften into amenity the harsh lines of poverty and dependence. Moreover, I do not deny that the Church is duly following the steps of her Leader when her paths drop fatness for the needy. But her mission upon the earth is the testimony of Jesus, and her privilege in this dispensation of the Spirit is to deliver an irresistible witness. We must tarry for this !

But wherein is our right to appropriate the promise, ‘Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence : tarry ye in the city until ye be clothed with power from on high ?’ If we are a Church in any sense our right to claim this promise is indefeasible ; for our work is to make disciples by the force of testimony ; and that testimony is concerning things not seen ; things which are foolishness to the natural man ; which he cannot know, because they are spiritually discerned. And with all our knowledge of the human mind, and our command of the appliances of conviction, we can no more put faith into a hearer of the Word than can the most skilled anatomist ‘create a soul under the ribs of death.’ And for this reason the pentecostal promise of the Spirit is the perpetual heritage of a testifying Church. Our right to the

promise is founded upon our right to exist, since God has *called* us to exist and made us a people. Sever us from the miracle of the Pentecost, deny that we are 'successors to the "power from on high," and you reduce us to a philanthropic institution. We are a charity organisation. If there be no miracle of the Spirit there is no Church. But we have an ancestry; and while we claim to be holders of the apostolic commission and heirs to the converting endowments of the apostolic Church, we are supported by the nearer history of our fathers. I am not going to speak in their praise. The pulpit is not the place to publish the honour that cometh from men. I am not going to extol their deeds or exalt their success, but to state what they believed as to their relation to the Pentecost miracle. They affirmed it to be their conviction that they were simply the instruments of the Holy Ghost; that, putting aside human infirmities and the inequalities of human service, the excellency of their ministry was simply of God and in no sense of man: that the demonstration of their testimony, a demonstration that confounded the wise, appalled the ignorant, and brought salvation to multitudes of every class, was the mighty power of God the Holy Ghost. Methodism was not born of a system any more than the apostolic Churches were born of a system. Methodism was not a preconcerted method for collecting congregations and organising societies; it sprang into existence from individual attestations of faith. It grew into the wider testimony of proclamation: for every conversion was the birth of a new evangelist. 'The Lord gave the word, and great was the army of those that published it;'* and in houses and streets and fields the voice of

* Ps. lxviii. 11.

preaching was lifted up; it was an irresistible voice; and, to borrow from the description of a work precisely similar in origin and character, *believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*. This was the Methodist movement, spontaneous in the rising of its life and falling into structure by the exigences of its irrepressible activities; like a river too full of body and of force to admit at first of being under the control of prescribed embankments, it ploughed up its own course; a very irregular course, spreading into abandoned regions and tracts that had been the despair of the cultivator and were 'nigh unto cursing;' but whithersoever it rolled the wilderness and the solitary place were made glad; and the desert blossomed abundantly, and rejoiced even with joy and singing.*

Brethren, there is ground close to our doors as parched and desolate as any spot which our fathers reclaimed; districts unvisited by the surveyor—nay, positively fenced out from the allotments of cultivation as belonging to no one. These districts belong to *us*; but we are powerless to take possession of them unless the divine force from on high shall again drive the united currents of our Gospel testimony, our love for Jesus, our sympathy for souls purchased but not reclaimed, and our experimental word, outside our own lines of circuit work *and according to the measure of another line*,† even that which God has apportioned to us, a measure to reach souls which no man cares for, which no Church has yet overtaken, even unto the margin of hell.

And now, brethren, having proved our right to the apostolic Pentecost by argument, testimony, and tradition, let us command it by supplication. Let our

* Isa. xxxv. 1, 2.

† 2 Cor. x. 13.

prayers be distinguished by those two features which are recorded as marking the wrestlings of the upper chamber, *perfect accord* and *patient continuance*.

That waiting Church was in perfect accord. One subject only filled their minds, the promised power. There was no dispute about it; and yet probably there was little agreement in their views as to what form it would assume or in what manner it would be distributed; but they wasted not a moment in discussing views; they did nothing to distract the concentration of their mind upon two facts: first, that in whatever form determined the Holy Ghost would come; and, secondly, that his coming would be in answer to prayer. The business before them was supplication; and whatever exercises engaged them beside the literal act of crying unto God, everything was intended to give light and force and encouragement to prayer. The principal effort of their understanding, when it was not absorbed in the inspiration and expression of desire, was what in Scripture is termed a *calling to remembrance*. All the words of Jesus were ringing in their ears. Every depressing suggestion awakened by the absence of his visible form was answered by his own explanation: *It is expedient for you that I go away*. When it occurred to them that the exposition of their Teacher's doctrines and life was committed to them, and that they had neither rank, nor learning, nor authority for the greatest work ever entrusted to man, and their hearts sank within them at the thought, they were recalled to fidelity and courage by the promise, '*Howbeit when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth.*' You will observe that although these first witnesses were humble men, humble in station and in culture, their unity was as intelligent as it was hearty; it was not all emotion. There was faith

based upon knowledge, there was love under the highest conditions of strength; it was love with a great task before it—not the task of winning its object, that of itself is a powerful motive—but the task of obedience to express its estimate of the object possessed. It was love hallowed by reverence, purified by trust, and intensified by gratitude.

The second feature of their supplication was patient continuance. *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.* It might be two, it might be twenty days; their impatience naturally favoured the earlier period: and that the delay of the promise was a trial is apparent from the words, ‘and these all . . continued steadfastly in prayer.’* Like Elijah they began when there was nothing to be seen in the heavens; for more than a week there was no outward sound of the coming rain. But the Father had reserved the season, and they would inquire no further about it; they would wait; none of the conditions prescribed to them should be lacking: they were all there; they were all united; they were all praying. If the faith of one failed there was a brother near to encourage him; the strong helped the weak; the enthusiastic animated the cold; the hopeful refreshed the desponding; the best-informed gave all the light they had to the unread; and all of them drew life from the sympathy of numbers. As it was afterwards affirmed that they threw all their temporal possessions into one fund, and had all things in common, so it may be said of their respective mental and spiritual advantages at this meeting, they were insensibly distributed; they parted their faith, their zeal, and their knowledge

* Acts i. 14.

to each other, as every man had need. On the morning of the tenth day the blessing came.

‘Thou who once didst shake the place
Where praying saints were met,
Spirit of faith and holiness,
The miracle repeat;
Now exert thy power to heal,
Thy waiting servants, Lord, inspire,
Warm their hearts with heavenly zeal,
And touch their lips with fire.’

VI.

‘QUIT YOU LIKE MEN.’

AN ORDINATION CHARGE DELIVERED IN TRINITY CHAPEL, GROVE STREET, LIVERPOOL, JULY 28TH, 1881, AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTERS ORDAINED AND OF THE CONFERENCE.

MY DEAR YOUNG BRETHREN, I never approached the performance of a public duty with a sharper feeling of responsibility than that which is now affecting me as I commence this task, the closing and the most important work connected with my year of office, of charging you to be faithful to the trust which you have ventured this day to accept in the presence of God and in the audience of his people; moved thereto (we doubt not) by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The scripture upon which I shall found the counsels and encouragements which I have undertaken to address to you is in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, chap. xvi. 13:—

‘Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.’

I cannot imagine a more humiliating condition than that into which the Church at Corinth descended after a season of remarkable prosperity. The Church was afflicted by these four evils—intellectual scepticism, flagrant licentiousness, internal strife, and spiritual pride. A more formidable task than that of applying a remedy for these disorders never engaged the prudence and responsibility of a minister. Take the single

evil of Corinthian *scepticism*. It was the growth of Greek philosophy and Greek art. It abhorred dogma, and did not choose to be careful to discriminate between the submission of reason and the contradiction of reason. It is probable that another evil which I have mentioned, the shocking license which had crept into the homes and into the solemn gatherings of the Church, was the offspring, or the near relative, of this sceptical temper—a temper altogether alien from the reverent and vigilant hesitation of philosophic doubt; it was insolent and disdainful. I will venture also to claim affinity with it for the strife which rent in several pieces the seamless vesture of Christ's unity; and even the pride of gifts and spiritual power belonged to the same 'family of plagues' that had drained the vital force and were now threatening the existence of the Christian societies of Corinth.

It would carry me too far away from the main subject of my address if I were to construct a parallel between the Christianity of Corinth when St. Paul wrote this epistle and the Christianity of England. But the resemblance is curious and striking, and this likeness affirms the present appropriateness of the text: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.' Each of these counsels as the apostle wrote them represented in his mind a distinct condition of things to which he intended it to apply, and while he addressed them to the whole Church he had particular reference to Church officers and workers, those whom scepticism might embarrass, and worldliness seduce, and strife discourage, and pride destroy. It was to these he applied the sum and conclusion of his glorious resurrection argument in the preceding chapter, 'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch

as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' But while the counsels of the text derive weight from their specific character, each of them being inspired by some want or necessity of the Church, the relation of the writer to that Church invests them with oracular authority. Paul planted Christianity in Corinth. He had made a careful study of the soil. He found it rich in productive virtue, capable of growing good and evil in equal luxuriance. He had surveyed every district, and explored beneath the surface until he touched the lowest *stratum*. He planted the faith in well-selected ground: Apollos watered it; and God gave the increase. No one could know so well as he how a work that had thriven under his own eye and hand should be fostered. He was forbidden by his own modesty to say as much, but the readers of this epistle could say it for him, that the conduct he sought to inspire was supported by his own example; for watchfulness, steadfastness, manliness, and power were the notable features of Paul's ministry in Corinth; and they must be the features of your ministry, dear brethren. The state of modern society, the phases of current literature, the audacious temper of philosophic speculation, the enticements that waylay consecration diligence and faithfulness, and the numberless unobserved influences, scarcely known to consciousness, that concur to make a man's work worthless and his life a failure—these circumstances, as they furnish parallels to the conditions which evoked the counsels of the text, can only be met by the acceptance and fulfilment of these counsels: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.' Your ministry must be distinguished by *watchfulness*, *steadfastness*, *manliness*, and *power*.

The language is military. Paul had never seen an engagement, but he was familiar with barrack

life, and one can imagine that there were aspects of that life that charmed him; its simple and absolute devotion, its discipline, its *esprit de corps*, the two elements of its might, unity and obedience, and the heroic qualities which were begotten of its dangers and its laurels. When he borrows a figure from the guard-room or the battle-field, the fidelity and spirit with which he uses it show that the allusion is not a mere grace of style; it is a vital constituent of the thought. To him Christian life was a contest, and he transfers to Christian action the nomenclature of camps. We must bear this in mind throughout our exposition of the apostle's counsels, although we shall assume the liberty of employing or dismissing the military metaphor as the range of our address may determine.

I. Your ministry must be marked by *watchfulness*.

It means more than being awake. It is concentrated attention in wakefulness. It springs from the conviction of danger, it is sustained by the responsibility of duty. It is one of those positions which are restricted to the individual himself. Watchfulness cannot be transferred: it cannot even be distributed. You cannot say with perfect accuracy *we* watch; it must always be, *I* watch. If there be many watchmen, the security of the guard is not in the unity of the number, as it would be in repelling an assault, but in covering every position of possible surprise by individual and responsible vigilance. The watchman for the time being personifies the army to which he belongs. He commands because he protects every man and every weapon and arm of the service. His first and main qualification is a knowledge and persuasion of the danger which has made him a watchman. The danger in your case is so manifold and so wide that it would be impossible to

condense the account of it within reasonable limits. Let me say that except the truth of God, which is God's throne, nothing in itself is safe. Safety dwells within adequate defence. Perhaps I may be able to include everything that is necessary or possible for the present occasion if I arrange my observations under two propositions :

1. Your ministry is a ministry of rescue.
2. Your ministry is a ministry of shelter and defence.

1. Your ministry is a ministry of rescue, not of education.

You are sent to announce a danger which until your message is delivered is unknown. You move about amongst men possessed of a revelation concerning them of which they are profoundly ignorant. They may have loose notions of religion ; but their ideas of the Supreme Being, of their relation to him, of a judgment-seat after death, and an eternal destiny answerable to their conduct before death, are not conscious truths ; they resemble in their practical effect the unreal images of a dream. They have no relation to living conduct. You are like the prophets of the Lord in the old time ; you carry within you the fate of individuals and of nations : 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned ;' and the people to whom you are sent are as unconscious of what is decreed concerning them as were the Sodomites of their fate, on the day that Lot entered into Zoar. You are entrusted with a revelation from heaven. Ignorant or heedless of that revelation men perish. It is your calling to declare it and to persuade men to believe it. The Holy Ghost has made you watchmen unto the house of Israel. Your minds have been raised above the level of surrounding thought and the absorb-

ing occupations of man's lower life, and you stand upon the divine ground that overlooks man's history and God's prophecy. You grasp the history as an argument of precedent, to support the announcement of prophecy. The sword of the wicked's doom is in the immediate future, but on this side of it is the hope of the sinner's repentance; from your elevation you are supposed to see both with equal clearness; the degree of that clearness is the degree of your fitness to obtain part of this ministry. The hand of the Lord is strong upon you to-day; he has called you to no easy task; much of it, indeed, is not merely difficult but repugnant to flesh and blood. When this is the word you are charged to deliver from the Lord, *O wicked man, thou shalt surely die*; and to proclaim it in an age like ours, and to spare not; to encounter the sullen insensibility of the masses, and the polished hostility of the rich, the intelligent, and the refined, you may well be tempted, like Moses, to ask the Lord to place a burden like this upon stronger shoulders than yours, 'Send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou shouldest send;'* or, like Ezekiel, to pause in bitterness and heat of spirit before you accept the mission. And what gives to this work a character that may intimidate the boldest is the fact that the minister's own salvation is bound up with the minister's fidelity. 'When I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning; . . . the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.'† He dies because iniquity is death; the death is charged to thee because thou hadst the power to avert it.

I beseech you to look with a fixed eye and a studious mind upon this aspect of a minister's calling, *warning*

* Exod. iv. 13.

† Ezek. iii. 18.

the wicked. Your work will be shorn of power in its two great functions of awakening and persuading, if you fail to apprehend that you are prophets of doom as well as heralds of mercy. Like John the Baptist you must look up and you must look down. Above you is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; beneath you is the axe of God lying at the root of the barren, the cumbering life of wicked unbelief; and you must convict the world of the sin of not believing the Lamb, and convince it of the wrath which is now still and harmless during a pause of forbearance, and of opportunity for the sinner to look at the pierced One, if haply he may mourn, and find pardon. What tremendous issues lie in that brief pause! The preacher commands the issues, and not the sinner; for how shall the sinner hear of them without a preacher? You have the power of saving that soul from death, and of letting that soul die. 'Who is sufficient for these things?' Who is able so to handle the argument of life and death as to present it unobscured and in the terror of its significance to those upon whose choice the alternative chosen is decreed? Who can measure the responsibility of him into whose hands this portentous task is committed? May the Holy Ghost who has called you to undertake it communicate to you the sufficiency of his inspiration, and the authority of his command, 'Now, therefore, go: I will be with thy mouth,* and thou shalt declare what I shall say unto thee.'

2. Your ministry is a ministry of shelter and defence. You watch over the souls you have rescued. You fold them within the ordinances of a Church, and they are your care until death shall discharge them from probation and you from duty. It is hard to rescue a soul

* Exod. iv. 12.

from death ; it is harder to maintain the rescue. The message that awakens is the sound of a trumpet ; it demands in him who delivers it a quick sight of the situation, a keen sympathy, and a courage of heavenly fearlessness ; but the work of sheltering and defending those whom the watchman's blast has hurried into the stronghold of the Church is a ministry comprising an endless variety of functions. There is a new class of dangers to master ; dangers more subtle in their quality, and therefore more remote from ordinary apprehension than the obvious jeopardy of the unconverted. The perils besetting your flock are relative first to the organised defences of the fold ; and secondly to the spiritual condition of the flock itself ; a condition not to be studied in the gross, but in the separate and characteristic features distinguishing the classes and even the individuals of the flock. The shelter of the Church is not the organisation of its institutions, but the pastoral oversight of its ministry. A minister may construct an elaborate plan of work, and fulfil every public engagement, and leave his Church shelterless. An eloquent sermon is no defence against the spirit of the world. A proclamation against blight affixed to your garden wall will not bar the approach of the pest and save your plants ; you must cover what you would guard with a stronger and more minute defence than a network of words. The spirit of the world will not be afraid of your sermon against worldliness ; for if you do nothing more than declaim against it, that spirit will listen to you and will contribute its admiration to your popularity. But if you follow it into the homes of your people, if you strip from it the popular guise of culture, and show that it is the Belial which has no affinity whatever with the Christ, and if your people see that you yourselves wage against it a personal and

uncompromising war, in the discipline of your pastorate, and in the ruling of your own households, you may cast out of the Church, and keep out, this arch-demon of spiritual mildew and death.

But the worldly spirit is one only of a legion of enemies from which your ministry must shelter the flock of Christ. Fashionable unbelief is nearly as destructive as worldliness. It puts on the mask of honest doubt, with which it has no more connection than has worldliness with Christian freedom. It insinuates itself into the current talk of the day ; it pervades the literature of taste and tinctures the learning of schools. It, moreover, finds sympathy in the natural depravity of the heart. Its ravages are not seen in open apostasy from the truth or in scandalous defections of the Church, but in the decline of the sentiment of reverence ; it depresses the *veneration* of religion. It scatters from the Bible the halo of the supernatural, and introduces into the interpretation of the sacred books a proud intellectualism which brings to its task the canons of a purely secular judgment, and disdains the help of prayer. But if there be little veneration for the Bible, and a looseness of impression on the subject of prayer, there will be a fading away of intelligent reverence for the sanctuary, and the declension of the feeling will spread into our homes. This hard realism which venerates nothing is even now apparent in many a Christian family, blighting the filial deference of children and violating the flower of filial obedience, hardening the sentiment into mere compact. You may settle this in your minds, that where there is no veneration for the Bible, and no reverence in the sanctuary, there will be no homage in the home. Against evils like these you can only provide adequate shelter by a personal watch of unsleeping vigilance.

Recollect, dear brethren, that the most exposed of your flock are those who cannot be made conscious of their danger—the little ones of the fold. Alike innocent of guile and suspicion, they cannot be safe outside the range of your sight. Oh look after these children in their families, in their schools, in their Church classes ! Guard them from pernicious books ; restrain them from unhallowed amusements ; allow no child to pause between the Church and the world ; show no mercy to the temper of indecision. Let me exhibit for your imitation the over-seeing and all-including sympathy of our Lord Jesus, *that great Shepherd of the sheep* : ' I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.'*

II. Your ministry must be marked by steadfastness in the faith. *Stand fast in the faith.* This exhortation must be interpreted by the help of the first verse of the preceding chapter : ' Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel, . . . wherein ye stand ; ' and the apostle proceeds to place in their order the truths which comprise the Gospel and the cardinal fact upon which they rest. The argument of the resurrection, which is the glory of this epistle, was addressed to the sceptical spirit of the Corinthian Church. That spirit expressed itself in the question, ' How are the dead raised up ? and with what body do they come ? ' This is the popular mode of exclaiming against dogma. Its tone does not indicate the earnest inquiry of a child spirit ; but the demand of an impatient and carping

* Ezek. xxxiv. 15, 16.

unbelief. The apostle's manner of replying to this temper must be copied by every minister who sets himself to encounter the rationalism of the modern Church. The unbelief of Corinth did not affect to stumble at the resurrection of Christ; it seemed to the popular imagination that this occurrence was not so remote from probability as the miracle of a general resurrection. Looking at the two events from a philosophical or scientific ground they are equally improbable. If the resurrection of Christ be granted everything pertaining to a general resurrection is granted. If a general resurrection be denied, the single example of Christ's rising from the dead must be repudiated with it. It is probable that the sceptical spirits of the Corinthian Church did not see what was involved in the exclusion of the resurrection from their creed. It had not occurred to them that in denying the resurrection of the dead they were maintaining that Christ himself was dead; that he lay in his tomb with the infamy of an impostor; and that the Church of which they were members, and in which they were proud to display their gifts and assert their power, instead of being a structure built upon the rock of truth, was a temporary fabrication resting upon a lie.

This heedless criticism is characteristic of what I may call *Church unbelief*. It is more destructive than avowed infidelity; and, permit me to add, it is by far the gravest symptom of the condition of the modern Church. Let me, then, advise you to study and imitate the method of St. Paul in dealing with the theoretic unbelief of believers. If in any case of intellectual conflict you discover that a particular dogma is a stumbling-block to faith you must make it clear that to give up that dogma is to surrender all revelation. There are some minds that cannot heartily subscribe

to the equal deity of Christ, but find no difficulty whatever in accepting the future punishment of the wicked. And if you once admit the right to try a dogma by the test of its likelihood your New Testament is written on the sand. If you disturb the position that a revelation from heaven cannot be subjected to the criticism of reason, you make a man's temperament the condition of his faith, and every one believes what he can. I have spoken of the heedlessness of Church unbelief and of Paul's method of refuting it by pushing it to its consequences; but he made his defence against this popular and unscholarly doubting complete by opposing to it the example of his own steadfastness. Perhaps the greatest human factor in the maintenance of creed-faith is sympathy. The people composing your congregations are not *thinkers*; even the most intelligent of them have not, as a rule, reasoned out the basis of their belief. In many cases the faith that comes to them by the revelation of the Holy Spirit precedes the instructed belief of dogma, and afterwards becomes its life; they both grow together until the Christian disciple is 'stablished, strengthened, settled.' In most instances the heavenly faith has not much human knowledge to support it: the mind grasps the person of Christ, and strengthens its hold by prayer, and by certain portions of the Word of God, not very extensive in their range, but of infinite preciousness and never-failing efficacy. And of those who have not fully believed unto eternal life, who represent various degrees of illumination, there are few whose intelligence and Christian training may be expected to shield them from popular Church unbelief. These are the classes that comprise the mass of your congregations and societies, and you will see at once how largely sympathy determines the character of faith. You are the defend-

ers of the Gospel; and the strength of your defence will be in proportion to the fastness of your own belief. You have the power of confirming or shaking the confidence of multitudes. You never preach a sermon where there will not be a listener whose hold of the truth will be supported or loosened by what he hears. And either result will depend not upon the force or weakness of your arguments, but upon the sympathy of your spirit. If that sympathy affect *doubt* it will generate doubt; if it indicate *steadfastness* in the faith it will reassure the misgiving and gladden and edify the believer. If you have a mind that cannot rest until it descends to the foundations of things, I beseech you to make your descent in the study; for if the pulpit become the theatre of your downward explorations, and you invite unpractised minds to follow you, you may enjoy an excursion, but some of them may find a grave. I maintain that it is strictly unjust for any preacher to exhibit his sceptical difficulties to a miscellaneous congregation; and for this reason, the exhibition must be imperfect: however able he may be, and whatever the length of his sermon, he can only set forth part of the case, and most of the congregation will never hear the rest. Need I remind you of examples that stand out to-day where the preacher, instead of leaving his theological speculations at home, has put them into his sermons, and where the sympathy of doubt has acted and reacted upon minister and hearers until they have drifted together into unitarianism, and may end, for aught I know, in atheism?

Lest I should be misunderstood, let me add that I do not discourage the spirit of investigation, nor would I forbid or dread or disparage sceptical sympathies; they are the *antennæ*, or feelers, of the mind; they make us suspect imposture and lead us to examine what we

touch, and we cannot do the truth a better service than sift it and discuss it. The most redoubtable apologists are bred in habits of analysis and research. But by whatever processes the apologist has been schooled, his vocation supposes a mind made up; and the authority and worth of his arguments will depend upon the confidence of his convictions. This vital law of defence is of universal application, but no class of advocacy does it more essentially concern than preaching the Gospel. It should absolutely govern the public utterance of every minister of Christ. On the other hand, I do not ask you to assume in the presence of your people an assurance you do not feel. This would bring mischief into your own spirit. It would hurt the bloom of that sensitive honesty between conscience and work which is the secret of a minister's force. Whatever impairs conscious sincerity is apt to reduce a man's eloquence to the clanging of a cymbal. May God save our pulpits from instrumental music!

You might well meet me at this point with St. Paul's demand, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' 'never to hesitate in the declarations of a sermon; never to assume an assurance he does not feel!' St. Paul shall answer his own demand: 'Our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament.'* The key of this problem is concealed in another Pauline passage: 'No man can say (can preach) that Jesus is the Jehovah, but by the Holy Ghost.'† You must distinguish between what is divine in your work and what is merely human. If you are truly called to preach 'the Christ, the Son of the living God,' the knowledge of him was not acquired by you, but revealed to you. The revelation came to you from the

* 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

† 1 Cor. xii. 3.

Father ; an inward voice moved you to proclaim it ; that voice, attested by proofs and signs which the Church is qualified and appointed to interpret, is the divine warrant of your ordination to-day ; it is not a temporary impression upon your spirit awakened once for all ; it is the call of the Holy Ghost, who, having first imparted to you the faith by which you accepted Jesus as the Lord, and then anointed you to be the preachers of this doctrine, now dwells within you to sustain its demonstration. There is no other means by which the demonstration of the truth can be sustained. It cannot be sustained by a familiarity with its formulas ; it cannot be sustained by the habit of preaching it ; for I have known a man to lose his faith and go on preaching his sermons. The Spirit must abide in you as the living proof of the truth, as a well of inspiration to freshen your convictions day by day, and to diffuse through all your faculties and heavenly gifts the vigour and the spring of perfect spiritual health. Cherish a reverent intimacy with the ever-blessed Person of whom Christ said, 'He shall take of mine and shall show it unto you,' shall be continually showing it unto you. This ever-renewed revelation of the faith shall insure for your ministry steadfastness in the faith.

Let this one fact never be forgotten by you : the apostles were not equally strong in all respects ; their conduct was sometimes marked by feebleness, by vacillation, and by hastiness of spirit ; they were men, and compassed with infirmity ; but concerning the cardinal facts of their Gospel we can find no trace of doubt either in their acts, in their counsels, or in their writings ; and, what is more remarkable, there is no trace of obscurity, judging from the sharp definiteness of the language in which they affirm their doctrines, and the

unsuspecting frankness and unblemished consistency of their personal disclosures. May God help you to be their imitators, and to justify the hope of the Church that in this respect (we are not anxious to make good any other) you are members of the apostolical succession.

III. Your ministry must be marked by manliness and power. *Quit you like men : be strong.*

We have said that the military thought governs the style of these exhortations. That which distinguishes military service from every other secular profession is devotion. This was more conspicuous in the soldier's life as St. Paul saw it than as we find it in modern armies. It may be useful here to collect those passages in St. Paul's epistles in which military allusions are employed to illustrate and enforce ministerial duty. 'This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, that . . . thou mightest war a good warfare.'* 'Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life ; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.'† This last counsel expresses with exact and forcible precision that feature of your ministry which under the designation of manliness I desire to describe and commend, and I shall, therefore, take the liberty of repeating it in the more accurate form of the revised version. 'Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life ; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier.' Timothy must consent to suffer hardship because the nature of Christ's service imposes it ; to object to its sufferings would be

* 1 Tim. i. 18.

† 2 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

an attempt to make terms with the service; and this would violate the main principle upon which such a service could be undertaken—the *principle of unqualified renunciation of self*. The analogy by which St. Paul explains his meaning is taken from a soldier on service. For a minister of the Gospel to bargain with the service of his Lord that he shall not work over a given pressure, that he shall not be exposed to particular reverses, that he shall be exempt from a certain class of duties to be discounted by himself, is about as reasonable and honourable a compact as a recruit entering the army with the distinct understanding that he shall never be marched to meet an enemy unless it can be arranged that he shall never be killed. The life of the soldier during service is offered to the state; it is not only given in its entirety, but all its energies, the intellect, the will, the passion of the man, are supposed to be unembarrassed by any rival claim, by any interest or affection which at the supreme moment may unbrace his resolution and disable his arm. For a soldier to quit himself like a man is to regard nothing, to know nothing, but his duty to the service. To perform heroic deeds and to be applauded for them may or may not be the fortune of his career. A contingent distinction affects not in any degree either the quality or the deed of his life. He is not enrolled to perform a brilliant feat of arms; the higher daring of his spirit is seen in his readiness to accept with equal cheerfulness whatever the exigences of the service may bring; while for opportunities of active valour he has an adequate reserve of passion, of strength, and of enthusiasm. A devotion of this temper is sublime in its manliness.

Such is the analogy by which St. Paul illustrates the Christian ministry; and the deviation in the parallelism of the two services is this, that the features which characterise the one are infinitely exalted in the

other. In your profession the consecration is not to the service considered in itself, but to the person of your Prince, whose kingdom you are recovering from his enemies, of whose realm you are not so much subjects as confederates. You are not mercenary followers to be engaged and dismissed, but joint heirs of the possessions to be reclaimed and of the glory of conquest. In addition to the ordinary motives of manliness in a soldier's career, you have the intelligence, the responsibility, and the aims of leaders under the great Captain of your salvation. Where you happen to be engaged, your conduct will sway the aspects of the conflict. There will be in those who follow you contempt of danger or dismay, fortitude or effeminacy, standing or fleeing, according to the character of your personal example. Therefore quit *you* like men and you will lead men. How easy for me to enforce this duty! how hard for the most resolute of us to follow it! It consists in having self absorbed in the service. '*I live, yet not I.*' Herein is the difficulty: unselfishness is supposed to be the genius of our service; and yet in the execution and fulfilment of it there is an intenser self-consciousness than any other profession or work is able to evoke. We are always before the public; the nature of some among us shrinks from the gaze of the crowd; and such men if they dared, if they heeded the remonstrances of flesh and blood, would never preach another sermon. But necessity is laid upon them; yea, woe unto them if they preach not the Gospel. Others catch inspiration from a throng. Public life is the element in which their faculties thrive and in which they are seen at their best. They covet the sway of a commanding utterance, or the triumph of a successful administration. But the snares which beset either temperament are laid in the same ambush, and the

struggle is in the endeavour to be unconscious of the self in the service; to raise the ‘I live’ into the ‘yet not I.’

Where the struggle has been continued for many years, and there has been no final conquest on either side, sometimes the self yielding to the service and lost in it, and sometimes the service overpowered and mastered by the self, it generally happens that the self, instead of growing weaker by exhaustion, is strengthened by the ever-recurring associations upon which it lives; and the contest is fought out to the bitter end. A minister at the close of his career, when fading powers narrow and yet narrow the large sphere of his work, until what occupied so great a space in the public eye has dwindled to a spot unnoticed, and then forgotten, may find himself confronted by his old adversary when there seems nothing left for that adversary to contend with. He is compelled to watch against a vanity which age has made sullen and contemptible; against a self-seeking which obscurity has made impertinent. This last fight may be unknown and unsuspected even by intimate associates; but the privacy of the struggle increases its fierceness and distress. Thank God the issue is never doubtful; the ‘I live’ submits at last and for ever to the ‘Christ that liveth in me.’ Whatever temperament you represent, whether the timid or the bold, you have discovered by this time that you cannot escape the fight between *the self* and *the service*. Let me beseech you to take a new position against the self from this day. Confront it like men, with a serious and a well-considered resolution that you will not parley with it; that you will allow it no place in the motives and provisions of work; that it shall this day be bound with cords, even unto the horns of the altar; that, cost you what it may, the abatement of public favour, the

surrender of friends, the restriction of means, nay, the abridgment of life itself, it shall go, and Christ and his service shall be all in all!

Many of us older men would rejoice to push back through the stream of years to the point of time at which you stand, and stand with you, that we may have the glorious opportunity of giving another life to this work with a far loftier standard of personal devotion. This is the want of the ministry to-day, and pre-eminently of the Methodist ministry. The peculiar economy under which this ministry is called, its pastoral relations to the Churches over which it presides, involving with duties that never change a *personnel* that is always changing, demands that enthusiastic and self-forgetting devotion shall be the supreme qualification of the pastors. You will not suspect me of disparaging the rank of intellectual qualifications; of biblical erudition in the man who is called to defend the Bible; of the arts of proclamation in him whose special vocation is *preaching* the Gospel; but I dare to affirm that at the present time neither learning nor oratory is the capital need of the ministry; and in submitting this statement I do not forget that the intellectual spirit of the age is hostile to your credentials, and with characteristic unfairness and irrelevant disdain charges you and your profession with obstructing the education of the race by the block of an old creed which it should be the aim of all honest intellectualists to lift out of the people's path. The fame of Christianity as the mother of schools and the nurse of science is too well established to make it worth while just now to meet this charge. If the contest in which you are engaged were a battle between learning and learning, between two schools of science, between two parties contending for literary ascendancy, you would strive to be more

learned, more exact, and more able than your opponents, and you would gain or lose the victory of intellectual authority. But the war to which you have been marched is between Christ and the world, *and this is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith in Him.* You have to conquer the insensibility of the masses, to disarm their aversion to holiness, to make them conscious of another building beyond the world upon which they dwell, even a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; you have to bring into their blind, gross, muddy natures a heavenly mind: and this work is not to be done by the consecration of any gift or acquirement which you may possess; it is only to be hoped for by bringing to it the unqualified devotion of the person of every man among us; it is to be achieved by the supreme enthusiasm of love to the world-loving Redeemer: by such a fellow-feeling with Him in regard to the natural condition of the souls of men, to the infinite worth of those souls and the glorious possibilities of their powers, and to the sacrifice even unto death itself which divine love is prompted to offer for them, as will make you so many Christs in the world; one with Him in the baptism of an all-immersing service, one in the cup of whatever sufferings it may please the Father to bring to your lips; and one in that strange overlooking of human distinctions and that stranger reverence for human nature manifested conspicuously when he found it oppressed and unhappy and forsaken. O brethren! when for you to live in this world is for Christ to live in it, when your speech and your mind and your ways answer to His speech and mind and ways, grace for grace, the mirrored lineaments of his image, the masses that are scattered abroad like lost sheep will detect in your ministry the shepherd-voice of allurements and authority, and they will troop after

you, as they trooped after Him,¹* crowding the inclosures of pen and of fold, and compelling you to push out your fences, and fill up with pasture the gaunt spaces that now yawn between Church and Church, until these shall touch and merge, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.

And now, brethren, in the name of the Conference and of the Methodist people, I welcome you into the matured rank of the ministry. Next to the consolations of God, your induction to-day is the solace of our Churches for the unexampled bereavements of the year. I call upon you to fill the places of the departed; this in all ages has been the office and distinction of young men. They have been supposed by the Muses to take their inspiration from the tomb, to be fired in their ambition by the deeds and fame of the dead; and Religion herself, while possessing sublimer sources of impulse, has not disowned the emulation of excellence. A scroll of nobler names was never displayed to the eye and spirit of ambition than that which Methodism has this year unrolled before the sons of her prophets. I ask you not to imitate their eloquence, to grasp the wreath of their popularity, but to reproduce, and if possible surpass, their toil, their sanctity, their fidelity to duty, and their loyalty to Jesus, that you may inherit the unfading crown of their reward.

* Mark vi. 33.

VII.

EARTHLY THINGS AND HEAVENLY THINGS.

'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.'—JOHN iii. 12, 13.

CHRIST hath declared unto us earthly things and heavenly things. When he speaks to us of earthly things we can judge for ourselves whether they are true or not; when he teaches us heavenly things we have no means, apart from himself, of proving the accuracy of his revelations. If he professes to be the instructor of our earthly life, let us see how far He has made that profession good. If in this respect we find—for we are the only judges—that his teaching is the most perfect we know; if in the earthly things he has told us we can detect neither weakness nor error, he may fairly challenge us to accompany him into regions where our own judgment deserts us, and we have neither authority nor guide but himself.

Let us consider Christ's position as a teacher of earthly things. By earthly things I shall understand those truths which appertain to the moral government of the world—truths which teach men how to live upon the earth; how a man should live in respect of

himself and in regard to his neighbours. In this discussion we have nothing whatever to do with forms of civil government, or with customs and social habits that are born of climate, or, introduced by accident, have developed into usage, and have merely a local importance. We restrict our consideration to those cardinal principles which, as men of all parties and of all nations acknowledge, ought to be the common property of mankind. It is agreed by the accepted authorities of every civilised and semi-civilised nation that truth should reign in all our transactions; that benevolence should pervade our fellowships; that the natural course of human nature is not that of improvement, but degeneracy; that it can only ascend by instruction and restraints; that society, under whatever form organised, should shield the life and property of the individual, punish the wrong-doer, and make its tribunals and asylums a refuge for the helpless and forsaken; that righteousness, or the practice of right, is the highest state to which a nation can educate itself. These are earthly things; and they are defined with more or less clearness, and accepted with more or less respect and obedience, in proportion to the advancement of our race. There are other earthly things, and pre-eminent among those we have omitted is the pursuit of knowledge. This, apart from anything else and for its own sake, is equally beneficial and noble, but its most ardent followers will admit that the highest fruit of science is virtue. We may therefore lay it down as a maxim of universal acknowledgment that the great business of the world is to make itself just and pure and humane. It is for this reason that we place those first in the ranks of fame whose wisdom and teaching have done most to raise the conduct of men to a higher righteousness.

Now as a teacher of earthly things it would be much to say that Jesus Christ stands first, the first of all teachers in all ages ; but this does not represent his position. He stands alone, even in the judgment of those who do not follow him. It is nearly 2000 years ago since he was born in an obscure country, in the lowliest grade of that country's population, a poor child of a poor mother, and grew up against every circumstance likely to depress culture and retard advancement. His public career comprised three short years, and he died long before the attainment of middle life ; he was a youth, and nothing more. He never wrote a book, or a sentence which has come down to us ; but he opened his lips and spake, and men wrote down what he said ; and his sayings respecting earthly things rule the world this day ! The governing thought of mankind professes to be the disciple of Jesus Christ. All the great nations of the earth are called after his name ; whether they truly reflect his teaching or not, they designate themselves *Christian*. We may call this pre-eminence Christ's reign over earthly things, and the confession and adoption of this reign are extending every year with a rapidity to which no former age furnishes a parallel. It is only within the last few years that the name of Christ as the chief teacher of earthly things has opened the heart of Asia. Far beyond the border of missionary triumphs he is hailed as the great teacher of the earthly life. His name comes from the west with all the *prestige* of its civilisation ; his earthly lessons follow, enunciated in principles, embodied in institutions, and illustrated by results that startle even the heavy equanimity of the East. Brethren, we are not now speaking of heavenly things, but declaring a plain earthly fact, of which

every man can assure himself; and it is almost as easy to account for the fact as to ascertain it.

There were three qualities in Christ's teaching never found at first and together in the instructions of any other teacher that ever appeared in the world; these qualities are *AUTHORITY*, *ACCURACY*, and *COMPLETENESS*. The authority of other teachers is that of experience: they acquire knowledge a little at a time, and by slow processes of trial; they teach with caution, as if they themselves were learners a little in advance of other learners; even in the best of the world's instructors, more frequently in the best than in the inferior ones, there is a modest faltering or hesitation of the judgment in the delivery of their lessons. I refer to the original teachers of men, the founders of wisdom. Fluency and confidence belong rather to the disciple who teaches second hand than to the Master who originates the teaching. But Christ never felt his way to the truth; his human mind grew into maturity, and acquired the progressive knowledge inseparable from growth; but his doctrines were not the accumulations of experience: 'My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;'^{*} this was said in answer to certain Jews who marvelled at his acquirements: 'How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?' And on another occasion we hear him saying, 'I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.'[†] In none of his declarations does he betray a symptom of misgiving. The tone at least of every utterance is the 'Verily, verily, I say unto you;' and again, 'I am the truth.'[‡] On every subject upon which

^{*} John vii. 16.

[†] John xii. 49.

[‡] John xiv. 6.

he opens his lips he assumes the authority of complete knowledge.

As for his *accuracy*, confining myself at present to earthly things, things of which all men may be in a position to judge, if he had made a mistake we should have heard of it: no teacher has had so many critics; no teacher has been criticised so long. The principles, lessons, and counsels of no other teacher have survived the test of so careful and universal an inspection. Every word of his recorded discourses and sayings has been placed under the lens of a critical analysis of ever-increasing power, and oftentimes by intensely antichristian students; but in his teaching of earthly things they never detect an error. He dwelt in an obscure corner of the earth, and among the narrowest and most bigoted people; yet he legislated for the world and for all time with the simple mastery of a father laying down rules for the government of his children. I have never heard of an antichristian sect formed to dispute the truth of Christ's teaching of earthly things. The enemies of his heavenly things are legion; but they are commonly the eulogists and professed followers of his earthly lessons. They dispute his divinity, they adore his morality; they doubt his miracles, they appeal to his wisdom. They affirm that he was no more than man, and yet in their laws, judgments, and institutions they testify that he is above man; for they say, in effect, that *there is no other name given among men whereby we must be guided upon the earth.*

This testimony impresses upon us the *completeness* of his teaching. What rule of conduct, either for a man, a family, or a nation, did he omit? The basis of earthly morality is the worship of God. We call this one of the earthly things because all the great teachers

of every age and faith have inculcated reverence to some power above us. Christ proclaimed to an idolatrous world, 'God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.'* Have we advanced upon this? The world never heard it before he spake it. Has philosophy done more than admire it as the sublimest truth ever delivered to man? And the intelligence and sincerity which he affirmed must underlie our religion he makes the basis of *human* intercourse, When he appeared there was everywhere such an appalling absence of truth, purity, and gentleness that his teaching, it might be almost said, originated them: and no man will deny that what the world possesses of these virtues to-day is the product of Christian doctrine. In resting the fulfilment of all law upon love, he opened a treasure of wisdom and knowledge never suspected before. He sent the law from the outside tablet into the heart; and insisted upon obedience beginning there, because transgression begins there; and by making love the motive of moral action, he not only provided for conduct the safest and most steadfast guarantee, but he linked all races together in the fellowship of one brotherhood. Have we gone beyond this? Have we attained unto it? Are not the hopes of thoughtful men, in all parts of the world where men do think, committed to the very principles of Christ's early teaching on the subject of human intercourse; that that intercourse should be open, equitable, loving, and world-binding? And if you go from Christ's authoritative announcement of the principles by which our earthly life should be governed into the apostolic exposition of them, you will find every desirable earthly state spring-

* John iv. 24.

ing from them ; whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, ' whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,'* and if there be anything else not included in these, you will find them all growing up and flourishing within the range of New Testament teaching and New Testament examples.

But when we have spoken of the authority, the accuracy, and the completeness of Christ's earthly teaching as taking him out of the category of wise leaders and instructors, and placing him absolutely alone, what shall we say of his earthly *life*? This is as far removed from human experience as his teaching surpasses human wisdom. Restricting our observation to the merely human aspects, the earthly things of that life, where his conduct is intelligible, if we can affirm that he lived up to the standard of his teaching, there is no other teacher of whom this can be said. But it would not be correct to describe him as living up to a standard. He seemed ever to come down from a higher altitude than the standard of his teaching. He moved about in a spirit of unapproachable purity ; a purity he never reached by a moral development ; for he was so closely watched, and in his external associations so thoroughly known, that if he had been more holy at one period of his life than at another we should have heard of it. There have been pure men in the world ; men upon the disc of whose character it is hardly possible to find a blemish : but when we bring the fairest life and place it next to his, we feel that it ought not to be so placed, that you cannot look at them together with the remotest conditions of comparison. Let him who demurs to this statement make the trial.

* Phil. iv. 8.

And when you pass from the negative grace of innocence into the positive features of spirit and action, you see him, not like a cloistered sage cultivating subjective piety in the easy* untempted leisure of seclusion, but enveloped in trial, in the thickest of the fight of life, doing battle with common enemies that you and I have to do battle with, and engaging with adverse influences and combinations that never confronted any career but his : whatever can try a man's principles, a man's spirit, a man's love, a man's faith in man, a man's faith in his cause, a man's courage, was permitted in forms of unexampled intensity to assail the blessed Christ. And he never swerved a hairsbreadth from the line he had marked out for himself,—‘The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.’*

Brethren, here is a faultless teaching of earthly things, which after eighteen hundred years of trial is still the dominant teaching of the world ; which is yet before us and above us as a standard to which the world confesses it must ever aspire ; here are lessons that have not been improved and added to by experience, but were delivered once for all, and remain unchanged ; principles of conduct as universal in their necessity as the atmosphere that sustains the life of the earth ; for which not only savages are putting away their fetish, but the ancient races of the Asiatic continent are forsaking their philosophies, and which, apart from the religious sentiment, they are adopting as their best earthly guide ; and, secondly, here is a life confessed by all who have looked at it to be the faultless life of all lives ; living out and transcending the teaching that came from it ; a life which no one ever thinks of comparing with any other

* Mark x. 45.

life; the purest, and yet the most tried; the most beneficent, and yet the shortest in active service; the most suffering, and yet the most steadfast; the most severely and virulently criticised, and yet the most widely accepted for the efficacy of its example: and this teacher of the perfect earthly doctrine, and the perfect earthly life, both of which are universally acknowledged to stand absolutely alone, and to be the spring of whatever moral truth and goodness the world possesses—I say this teacher passes through the material world, to the end of which he has led us, into a world and a life of dense mystery, and bids us follow him *there*! He tells us of beings this earth never saw, of states of existence surpassing in wonder the most fantastic exaggerations of romance; he describes himself, his antecedents, his present position, and his future, in terms which, while standing before us as a human being in a particular period of time, exalt him above time, above its operations and its history, making him the projector of the ages and the fountain and continual providence of all being.

Reason, which has been following him with grateful pliancy up to the brink of such a mystery, may naturally stagger and become irresolute before it follows him further: but, having recovered from the hesitations of its first surprise, it is bound to follow him further, unless it would stultify its preceding allegiance. If it be replied, We follow him as long as we understand him, is not such an answer flippant rather than earnest? If you knew not how to live upon the earth until he taught you, you were ignorant of the earth and your relations to it; in other words, earthly life was a mystery to you. I grant that you were able to verify his earthly teaching when you heard it; but have you nothing that answers to the heavenly

things he teaches? No intimations within of the *immortality* which he brings to light? No witness to the *sin* which he exposes as the radical disease of our race? No yearning for a deliverance which he declares to be impossible except through him? No irrepressible ejaculations of distress to some Power round about and within humanity, and yet above us all, whom Christ proclaims as our Father in heaven? These facts of consciousness, by the confession of every school of thinkers, make us a mystery to ourselves; and *mystery* is the ground of your rejection of Christ's heavenly things!

But the inconsistency, the unreasonableness, of this rejection becomes flagrant when it is seen that the earthly things which you accept spring from the heavenly things which you deny. You may separate, we have done so for the sake of the argument, the earthly things from the heavenly; with him, so far as they relate to man, they are the parts of one plan. Human life is one career stretching into the unseen, of which the history in this world is the preliminary chapter. You admire Christ's second law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;'^{*} you confess the justness, the beauty, of a doctrine which makes equal affection the basis upon which all the details of human fellowship are to be reared. Why then do you stumble at his first law, without which the second has no root, and can have no growth? 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.'^{*} That beautiful system of ethics which we described in the beginning of this discourse, which is the moral authority of the present day, blends in his

^{*} Mark xii. 29—31.

sayings and life with the heavenly things which men hesitate to receive. The purity he inculcates, the meekness, humility, equity, patience, mutual forgiveness, and laborious benevolence, duties that comprise the subjects of his teaching of the earthly things, are declared by him to be the fruits of the heavenly things. Therefore, when he takes you through the earthly life with a firmness and precision of guidance that never falters, never doubts, never errs; and affirms that the mystery which edges this life is but a veil which he was sent to draw aside, you are bound to go after him when he beckons you to follow him through that veil. He has been true in everything else, unchallenged in everything else, you ought to presume that he is true in this also. You see no alteration in his manner when he delivers his heavenly things; the most astounding testimonies regarding the unseen, revelations that leave all experience behind and hold all reason in suspense, come from his lips with the same easy and masterly familiarity with which he inculcates the simplest earthly lesson. He that says, Love your enemies, preaches repentance towards God and faith in him as the Father's gift; and adds: 'If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.'*

Why was he able, above all other earthly teachers, to take the unchallenged position accorded to him by the sanction of ages? Because he alone knew what was in man. He had a perfect knowledge of the human soul; of what the mind was in itself, and in every possible combination in which it may be found. He gave laws for the mind two thousand years ago; we have those laws to-day, and they are the stay of the moral world. If he could legislate for all time, is it not a

* John viii. 24.

presumption that he could legislate for eternity? He says that the mind that rejects him will be unhappy for ever; that cut off from him there can be hereafter no order, no progress, no joy. Is it consistent, is it rational, to treat these words lightly? And let me remind you that there is no justification for their conduct who reject Christ's heavenly things on the plea that they have no knowledge, no consciousness of those heavenly things. When you hear the revelations which we preach from this Book, though you may have no personal ground to judge of the accuracy of their details, do they not look as if they were true? When fairly you bring yourself face to face with them, have you not inward answerings to the truth of several of them? When we preach to you a Saviour that came down from heaven; that he is a great Refuge in our midst; the bearer of our sins, the helper of our infirmities; our guide and succour in a path of ever-increasing feebleness and uncertainty; the tried friend of all who cleave to him, and most precious when most we need support: do you not feel that you want such a Deliverer and Friend? You acknowledge that eternity is darkness to you; and if, in sceptical moments, you suspect that that darkness is unsubstantial, is nothing, there are times of serious thought when failing health or failing hopes provoke an anxious foreboding lest that darkness should prove to be the projected shadow of another life. And dare you venture into that gloom without giving Christ a hearing respecting the heavenly things, when through all your life you have proved the accuracy of his earthly things? When you have said, *yea, yea*, to all the perfect lessons of his wisdom, bowing before their authority, proving their exact truth, and acknowledging their completeness, will you say, *nay, nay*, when he commands you to repent of your

sins, and flee from 'the wrath to come'? You may object to the word *sins*, but do not quarrel with a word, you know what he means, *wicked ways*; and you confess it would be an unspeakable gain if you could relinquish them: you may object to the expression, *wrath to come*; but you have the foretaste of the doom, the bitterness of sin; sin has brought upon you losses you can never repair; habits you would sacrifice everything but life to be able to forsake; connections, it may be, that humble and shame and ruin you; the anguish of useless regrets, and the dreary, sullen consciousness of a failing fight and a losing race. The bitterness of sin is *here*; may it not be also *hereafter*? We will not wrangle about words and phrases: you are burdened with a weight that man cannot lift from you; you have sorrows that lie far below the springs of tears; troubles from personal failure and anxiety that you cannot pour into the heart of another, even though that heart beat next to yours; you maintain a conflict alone; a conflict sometimes fierce in the intensity of its struggle—with passion, with doubt, with conscience, with reason; you are weary of it; you cannot stand up through it all like a man; you may assume to be erect, but in your heart of hearts you know that you are bent and broken and helpless! Oh! listen to the words of Jesus; do they not describe and anticipate an extremity like yours: 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest'? Many of us came to him with a misery like yours; we saw nothing, we heard no audible words; but a great presence came into our hearts, and the chaos of our thoughts subsided, and distinct forms of truth arose; the atonement of Christ, we leaned upon it; the fatherhood of God, we cried, *Abba!* the ministry of a wise, tender, and personal

providence, we saw all things working together for good, and, when the earthly house should fail, a building of God to receive us, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens! * Our Saviour is your Saviour; 'we have all of us one human heart,' and Christ's great heart is the sum and substance of ours.

There is just one other fact that finds a place in the argument that seeks to establish Christ's authority as a teacher of heavenly things: that fact is the Church. The Church is built, not upon Christ's teaching of the earthly things, but upon Christ's mysteries. You are at liberty to designate the Church what you please. We mean by the Church all that in every place call upon, or pray unto, the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. † I repeat, you may give this Church what name you please, but you cannot deny its pre-eminent power; your candour must admit that with serious, and, perhaps, shameful blemishes, it is the mainstay of nearly everything that is good in the world. Your literature and science were born under its influence and fostered by its care. The Church of Christ is the mother of your free institutions and your noble charities; and most of the greatest and best men that ever flourished were proud to be her disciples, and not a few of them compose her army of martyrs. But the doctrines to which this catholic body owes its existence, this body that represents the foremost culture and civilisation of the world, are the heavenly things that belong to the region of pure revelation—the deity of Christ, the atoning death of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and a final judgment. These dogmas of the supernatural which many practical men affect to disparage are the

* 2 Cor. v. 1.

† 1 Cor. i. 2.

foundations upon which the best practical results have been built. May the Head of the Church enable us his followers to bring out these mysteries into the intelligible expression of the life, to give them shape, to embody them in the readable type of spirit and action ; that we may be epistles of Christ known and read by all unbelievers for their obedience to the faith ; that every knee may bow and every tongue confess, not merely that he is the earth's greatest teacher, but that he is Lord of all, to the glory of God the Father !

VIII.

OUR LABOUR NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD.



SERMON ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. L. H. WISEMAN, DELIVERED
IN CITY-ROAD CHAPEL ON FEBRUARY 22ND, 1875.

*‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always
abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that
your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’—1 CORINTHIANS xv. 58.*

ST. PAUL, in this chapter, stands between the living and the dead : he speaks of the dead for the sake of the living ; he speaks to the living for the sake of the work they were doing for the Lord. Their energy for the performance of that work would depend upon what they considered to be their relation to the dead. Unlike certain modern thinkers, the apostle did not believe that there could be steadfast, healthy work for the Lord Jesus where there was any faltering on the doctrine of the grave. The state of the missionary Church at Corinth was not favourable to missionary work. There was a mournful license in morals, there was scepticism in regard to some of the chief verities of the Gospel, there was a bitter party spirit in the congregations and Church meetings of the people. Different parts of this epistle are devoted to

the correction of these evils; and the chapter now before us addresses itself to the speculative temper of the Corinthian Gentile Christians. They belonged, for the most part, to the lower middle class of the Greek population; but there were men of education among them, and some of these embarrassed the faith of humbler brethren by suggesting difficulties affecting the resurrection of the dead. St. Paul's Corinthian converts, during the absence of their apostolic father, were only too prepared by their old idolatrous habits to listen to sentiments which disparaged the human body. They had been accustomed to regard it as a vessel fated to dishonour; the perishable plaything of a man, for the abuse of which the loftier mind was hardly responsible. When, therefore, their clever sceptical friends explained to them that the Christian doctrine of the resurrection had no application to the body, but simply meant the waking up of a dead soul to spiritual life, and that in every true believer the resurrection was past already—their last defence seemed to have fallen, *and the enemy came in like a flood*. They were not aware that when they excluded from the Gospel a particular doctrine on the ground of its improbability and its apparent disagreement with reason and experience, other truths which they would not venture to dispute must go with it. They did not see that in saying there was no resurrection they affirmed there was no Christ, and that the denial swept away the foundations of the entire structure of their faith. The doctrines of the Gospel are revelations, they are parts of one vast mystery; and it is perilous work to divide between them according to their relative probability. We may receive it as a maxim in theology, that if you reject one capital doctrine you cannot enforce the claims of the rest;

a general uncertainty will attach to them all if the demonstration wavers in the evidence of one; and their moral power upon the conscience and life of men loses the compactness of direct heavenly authority. Everything went wrong in the Church at Corinth because the doctrine of the resurrection was impugned: there was a relaxed conviction of the heinousness of sin, there was a fading estimate of the value of the atonement, there was a temptation to give up the natural immortality of the soul and to return to the old Epicurean rule, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.*

There was another evil, and more full of disaster than any I have mentioned, the paralysis of Christian work. When any of the labourers fell, the doubtfulness of their future state seemed to belong also to the work which they left behind, and others had small encouragement to enter into it. For lack of sympathy, unity, and success, the work had lost its character as one forward movement to the help of the Lord against surrounding error and ungodliness, and was broken up into independent and random exertions; and the gifts of the Spirit so liberally bestowed upon the Corinthian Church were either silenced in her assemblies or perverted to the uses of ostentation and vanity. Never was the pen of an inspired writer more absolutely abandoned to the finger of God than was St. Paul's pen when he set himself to re-affirm, in this wonderful chapter, the resurrection of the dead. It has kept many a Church to its work when otherwise it would have drifted fatally into unknown seas of speculation. Observe the calmness with which he traces step by step the historical argument for the resurrection of *Christ*, in order to reduce to an absurdity any *Christian* denial of the general resurrection.

The light which shines out from his exposition of sin, death, atonement, and life, discovers their inseparable links; none of them has any use, nor indeed any meaning, divided from the rest; and the faith which does not embrace them all can have no saving hold upon any. But we are most impressed by the apostle's manner when he passes from his historical statement, and the doctrines logically deduced therefrom, into the region of pure revelation. His tone is as firm, his style as clear, his descriptions as minute and as assured, as if he were still the historian instead of a prophet. He disposes of objections not with the slow carefulness of a thinker who has gone more deeply into the subject than you, but with the impatience of an eye-witness who has had the testimony of his senses questioned; and the rapidity, yet perfect ease and naturalness, of his transitions, makes us lose sight for a moment of the stupendous discoveries that almost every verse brings out from the mysteries surrounding us. But the central fact which occupies the largest space in this firmament of lights, and from which all others take their glory, is the enthronement of the risen Christ, who is seen sitting in the heavenly places on the right hand of the Majesty on high, reigning, yet not in repose, but in progressive conquest, putting down all other rule and authority and power, until all enemies are under his feet, the last enemy that shall cease to trouble his government being *Death*. His followers, an already countless and ever-accumulating host, are beheld here as separated into two classes—those who are working with him and those who are resting in him: ‘For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.’* We,

* Rom. xiv. 9.

the living, are with the Lord in conflict ; the soldiers of his army, the councillors of his chamber, the swift couriers of his messages, the ambassadors of his court ; we are supposed to be ready for any and every service which an aggressive and all-conquering enterprise may require of subjects and followers. We are putting enemies under Christ's feet ; this at least is the purpose for which we live ; and life which is diverted from this aim is lost to Christ. The great, the essential duty of every Christian is resistance against all rule and authority and power which oppose the sovereignty of Christ. We are fighting this great fight in various ways ; and the weapon which is handled, the skill which wields it, the wisdom which directs it, are equally various ; but in all lands, among all kindreds of the earth, wherever the followers of Christ are found, they are, it may be slowly, subduing kingdoms, working righteousness, out of weakness are made strong, waxing valiant in fight, and turning to flight the armies of the aliens.*

- It is this purpose of making Christ head over all things which unites the apparently separated and discordant efforts of God's people into one movement. It is a beautiful vision that sometimes in moments of prayerful retirement and breathing time comes within the range of the eye of faith, this army of the living God subduing all nations and peoples to Jesus ! But there is no tabernacle for us on the Mount of Vision : when the hour of musing is over, and the glory returns to heaven, and we descend again to the ground of our own local struggles, and the losses, the sufferings, the sorrows incident to warfare, pass immediately before our eyes, affecting, it may be, our

* Heb. xi..34.

own share in the battle, then it becomes hard, very hard, to keep the hand to its work and the heart in its place. There are in the strife passages of absorbing enthusiasm, and the glory of a sudden success makes us unconscious of the agony of work by which we have won it. But when it is purely a fight of faith, when the steady performance of duty is unattended by cheering excitement, it is a heavy task to maintain the encounter against the impressions of sense, the remonstrances of bodily weakness and the exaggerations of fear; and when the mind is perhaps intellectually in sympathy with the suggestions of unbelief. It is not always easy to preserve the *posture* of resistance, to say nothing about the immovable steadfastness enforced in the text. Every one of us in the actual fight will have his seasons of depression and weeping, not on his own account mainly, not through a fear for the ultimate issue of the conflict, but from a natural proneness to extend the impression and estimate of what is taking place around us to the entire field. If the battle goes hard with us, it goes hard with every one on our side. If the enemy just in our front is overwhelming in numbers and strength, he is threatening with equal odds everywhere. These are moods of weakness, and the boldest will not escape them. It is the earthly texture of the vessel in which the treasure of our faith is kept; and never is this side of our nature more apparent than when fellow-soldiers fall suddenly at our feet in the midst of strong service, and are carried off the ground. When there is a natural decay of powers, and gradations of frailty and diminishing work prepare us for the removal of companions, we bow, though sadly, to a universal decree. But to see eclipsed in a moment vigour, experience, faith, and all the qualities which make a support, when we most need support,

is to be left a prey, for a time, to the perplexities of a defeated hope.

If it had so pleased Christ, he could have made his apostles superior to ordinary feebleness; we should then have heard nothing of their fears within; nothing of a dread of sorrow upon sorrow lest a brother apostle, who was apparently dying, should be snatched from their midst; nothing of being *perplexed* and *cast down*. But Jesus kept these men to the ground that they might address us, not from angelic heights, but from human levels, as sharers in the decay of powers and in the loss of labourers, as well as in the glories of an everlasting and an ever-growing work. It is not an angel who cries, *Be ye steadfast!* but a brother beloved, a fellow-mourner, who buried companions and wept over them; who was torn by anxieties lest the work of God should be impeded by the sickness or decease of brethren. It is he who walks with us to the graves of the departed; and beckoning to the living who will soon depart, he takes his stand by the side of an open and deserted tomb, and pointing to its vacancy he cries, 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.' At once we see this dreary sepulchre ground a harvest field sown with life: life to be regathered in exact numerical correspondence and personal identity with the life inclosed. The gloomy idea of an impersonal diffusion of matter, the painful impression of loss, disappear, and we see a slumberous host sleeping in Jesus: resting from their labours; their work not even pausing while the weary sleepers are being taken to their bed. The risen reigning Christ folding his dead, and directing, stimulating, and prospering his living; the work remaining, the agents passing; and yet there is the closest connection between those who work and those

who have retired from work to the unseen rest. Here are two sources of encouragement. The first is found in our relation to Christ. The second, in our relation to the dead.

1. Our relation to Christ is that of servants whose sole business upon earth is to abound in their Master's work. We must recall and keep before us the nature of this work: it is progressive conquest until 'the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.' This march through the earth, like *an army with banners*, to 'put down all rule and all authority and power,'* while it depends for its triumphs upon the hosts of the Lord, is yet independent of particular followers. It is never arrested by the fall of leaders and standard bearers. Every member of the host knows that the Lord 'must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet.' No man can speak thus of himself: 'The issue of the victory depends upon me, upon my plans, upon my staff of workers, upon my Church.' This is a matter of boasting rather than of humiliation; for the crown of our rejoicing is the crowning of Jesus. Let that consummation be effected by any means, so it be accomplished; and the follower who is imbued most deeply with his Leader's spirit, and whose eye most steadily rests upon the mark and prize of his high calling, will glory in this, that whatever *he* may be permitted to contribute to it, whether much or little, Christ shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.† He lives in the prophecy of his Lord's final and celebrated pre-eminence.

The spirit of this self-nothingness in respect of the

1 Cor. xv. 24.

Ps. ii. 8.

conditions of our Lord's crowning success, is a marked feature in the character of St. Paul; it distinguished all his brethren, but in his case there were circumstances which brought it into prominent expression. 'Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*' The ground, the seed, the water, the ordinance of growth, God's: Paul and Apollos, day labourers in God's husbandry: and even in this position, it was not they that laboured, but the grace of God which was with them. Who would not tremble for the ark of the Lord, if the question of its defence rested merely in the strength of human hands and the courage of human hearts, even if these belonged to apostles? Who, to insure its success, would entrust to his own wisdom any single or secondary movement for the promotion of his Master's cause? Who would not hate himself for it, in calmer moments, if in the holy strife of Christian work he permitted an envious glance upon a worker who was doing more work than himself and better work, achieving a quicker success and attracting more observation? Who that has studied the words of Jesus, 'There is no man which shall do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me,'† can forbid any disciple who is trying to cast out a devil, because the man happens to belong to another company or to no company at all? St. Paul's ardour carried him even further than this appreciation of rival Christian effort; he appropriated the labours of enemies: 'Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and

* 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

† Mark ix. 39.

strife; and some also of good will. . . . What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

I have known no man in whom this breadth of sympathy was more conspicuous than in the lamented minister in whose death we seek to read our lesson this morning. Even if grace had not touched into heavenliness the outlines of his natural character, there would have been a manly indifference to personal ends: something outside would have possessed the stronger claim, and have carried his heart and his exertions away from himself. And when his nature, refined and softened by the Holy Spirit, was put into the larger mould of the Gospel, and he became *a man in Christ*, the most noticeable grace in that complement of many excellences was the charity that *'seeketh not her own.'* It widened the sphere of his labours; for his pulpit knew no restriction and his platform no party: it lent an ineffable charm to his personal intercourse, and insured for his services and character the popularity which attends personal worth and never loses its possessor a friend. And yet, this noble disposition, which sent his mind everywhere in search of offerings to be pressed into the Master's service, and which made him see some good in almost everything, never, that I am aware of, even tempted him to relax into license the doctrines entrusted to his care. The dogmatic rigidity of his theology was as remarkable as the liberal interpretations of his charity. He never thinned out the teachings of the Spirit to accommodate a hard doctrine to the prejudices of his hearers. No man had more right to join himself to

* Phil. i. 15, 18.

that class of preachers (may they still abound in Methodism) who take as their motto the watchword of Paul, 'Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' * We may add that no man looked with more uneasiness upon what is called in these days the development of doctrine. He accepted and preached the faith as delivered, not only in its spirit, but in its word-formulas, once for all. At the last Conference, in his charge to newly ordained ministers, he concludes a remarkable paragraph in these words: 'How emphatic is St. Paul's language to Timothy, "The things which thou hast heard of me, the same" untouched, unaltered, "the same," no addition of man's device, no subtraction or concealment of unwelcome truth, being allowed, "the same commit thou to faithful men," men who in their turn will scrupulously guard the sacred deposit entrusted to them, and hand it down to their successors unimpaired! Here then we have the true apostolical succession, the succession of men receiving from their fathers and elders in the Gospel the glorious verities of the faith, teaching and proclaiming these verities during their life ministry, and handing them down unchanged and uncorrupted to a following generation.'

By this feature of our beloved friend's example is illustrated the encouragement now under consideration, our relation to Christ as *servants*, abounding in his work, and yet passing away as particular agents, without arresting the progress, or in any way hazarding the consummation of the work itself.

The second source of encouragement is found in our relation to the dead.

We die, but our work is not in vain in the Lord. This was St. Paul's consolation and a never-failing

* 2 Cor. v. 11.

spring of comfort to the early Christian workers. The fountain was unsealed by Jesus himself: 'I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.' *

1. *We have the work of the dead.* We need not concern ourselves as to which part of it is perishable and which part goes into the permanent aggregation. It is doubtful whether any honest work for Christ is perishable. The forms of it disappear; and even that which is gathered into the garner of literature, or preserved in institutions, is destined to an early or later dissolution. But the work itself is immortal, and in perpetual action in the transmission of principles and standards of faith, in the genesis of character, in the extension, from age to age, from century to century, of the kingdom of our Saviour, and by means which, if we should count them, are more in number than the sand. Everything offered to the Lord is carried forward. Whether a man glides out of sight when his day and his work are done, or whether he is cut down before us in the plenitude of his strength, or whether the service required of him is simply a preparation for labour, and he is offered upon the altar when the new gear of work and the untried yoke are simply decorations for sacrifice, nothing is lost, nothing is vain in the Lord. But we have more than their abstract work:—

2. *We have the examples of the dead.* We may indeed say that their example is the sum of their work. But the example is the *life*; and in this the dead are more closely united to us, for they live before us. By an ordinary effort of the imagination we can recall those we have known, delineate the

* John iv. 38.

presence of those we have not known, and strengthen ourselves in the promises which they now inherit. In this way, possessing their words, their sufferings, and their labours, we *come unto the spirits of just men made perfect*.* We are carrying on their work by the virtual co-operation of their life. If we lack the helpful joys of their visible companionship, we have, what we never had before, the fellowship of their complete life, and we miss the anxieties and uncertainties of an unfinished career. A crowned witness fires us with a higher stimulus than a fellow-competitor. Apply this observation for the sake of direct appeal to our own Church. Methodism is rich in the inheritance of embalmed character. If the names and deeds we delight to honour have not the celebration of national monuments, they are enshrined in the hearts of our people. They inspire the labours of our students, they impart wisdom to our deliberations, they quicken the flagging zeal of workers, they kindle the enthusiasm of our meetings; and the stories of their fidelity, their patience, their sufferings, and their last victory, shed a perpetual light upon the gloom of our sick-rooms and waken songs in the night season. No mean accession to this treasury of example has been furnished at a great cost by the sudden removal from our midst of our now sainted brother. We have had, it may be, profounder thinkers and more accurate scholars, but it would be difficult to find a man whose public life presents a more healthy example to the present generation of Methodist preachers and workers. I have already referred to one marked excellency of his character; and it is not my purpose to attempt a formal and complete portrait of his mind; but to use such

* Heb. xii. 23.

features of it as may give point and force to the exposition of our text. His was a life that will long linger in the memory ; its elements are always popular : simplicity, candour, courage, and good nature ; the epithets noble, manly, generous, describe his friendship and the general tenor of his intercourse. The spirit in which he did his work was godly, unsparing, unselfish ; yet the heaviest duties appeared to sit so lightly on him that he never seemed conscious of a burden, but moved easily and even jauntily along where other men stoop and can just bear themselves up. This may be explained by the rare buoyancy of his spirit and his great physical strength ; for it certainly cannot be attributed either to an indulgent conscience or to habits of easy preparation. His work always discovered marks of deliberate thinking and careful pre-arrangement. His sermons, even in the ordinary and obscurer course of his ministry, never consisted of mere *talk* to his people ; and on great occasions he always equalled and sometimes surpassed the service expected of him. May the mantle of the departed servant of God fall upon the younger brethren of the Connexion whom he so tenderly loved, and with a double portion of his spirit ! May the appeals by which he sought to kindle the missionary spirit of our younger laymen, and which his death will widely revive, have a new voice from his tomb, and wake up labourers for our foreign field. May we all obey the exhortation which, from the work he has left behind and from the rest into which he has entered, he addresses to a bereaved Connexion : ‘ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’

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